Cecil's Knight

E. B. Hollis

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"'Well done, Louis!'"—P. 74.

CECIL'S KNIGHT.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "CECIL'S SUMMER," "CECIL'S COUSINS," "WORDS AND DEEDS," "GLIMPSES THROUGH," "KATHARINE'S EXPERIENCE," ETC.

"Euer Leben ist eine Ritterschaft."
LUTHER.

"But dream not helm and harness
The sign of valor true;
Peace hath higher tests of manhood
Than battle ever knew."
WHITTIER.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	41
CHAPTER III.	51
CHAPTER IV.	63
CHAPTER V.	80
CHAPTER VI.	133
CHAPTER VII.	143
CHAPTER VIII.	163
CHAPTER IX.	179
CHAPTER X.	199
CHAPTER XI.	236
CHAPTER XII.	255
CHAPTER XIII.	275
CHAPTER XIV.	293
CHAPTER XV.	308
CHAPTER XVI.	329

CECIL'S KNIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

"Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies.
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind."

—TENNYSON'S *Guinevere*.

THE afternoon sun shone brightly on the large playground belonging to the grammar school of West Warren.

The scholars were very proud of that playground, and it certainly was a pleasant place. Most of it was bright and sunny, but two or three great trees, on the side nearest the street, gave refreshing shade, and benches were placed around their trunks, which seldom lacked occupants.

Some of the boys, at their teacher's suggestion, had brought suitable earth, and made tiny flower-beds, for which the girls had supplied seeds and plants, and the needed care. They had been wisely placed close to the wall, as much out of the way

of harm as possible; but even there, though no one would wilfully have injured them, accidents so often happened to them, that it had been found needful to protect them by a kind of rough fence, made of shingles and bits of board, driven obliquely into the earth, so that they formed a rude roof over them.

Grass grew around the borders wherever it could get a chance, but it might as well have tried to grow in the middle of Broadway, as in the middle of this playground. The earth was trodden down hard and firm under the ceaseless impact of so many feet, and for a wide space there was no vestige of the green carpet which had once covered it. Children and grass do not grow together, and it was only another instance of the "survival of the fittest."

At this hour the playground was empty, and it lay basking in the warm sunshine as if it rejoiced in the interval of restful quiet. But the interval was not a long one.

There had been a continuous murmur of voices from the schoolhouse, occasionally varied by the louder tones of some extra zealous pupil, but it ceased now. The tinkle of a bell was heard, and in a moment, as if by magic, the quiet playground was transformed into something which resembled an ant-heap, whose inhabitants have just been disturbed, except that the ants' activity is noiseless, — to human ears, at least, — while every

tongue in this assembly was in exercise, contributing its quota to the deafening noise.

"Where's Louis Thorne?" one of the boys exclaimed, after a vain search among the swarm for his particular friend. "Has anybody seen him? He can't have gone home."

"Not he," another answered. "He stayed behind, at Miss Rawson's desk. Didn't you see him? He is mooning away over that sum about the interest at three and a half per cent for three months, that none of us could make come right, and Miss Rawson said she would explain it to us after school, if we wanted to stop. Catch me staying in for that! I get explanations enough in school hours, without going in for extras. Come along now, Harry, and see the ball game."

"Not yet," Harry said. "Go along, and I'll come directly. I'm going to wait for Louis."

"Oh, bother!" John returned. "He knows the way, I guess, and he's big enough to go alone."

"So are you," said Harry.

"Barnum ought to get you two fellows to show off for Siamese twins," John went on. "Here's your other half coming now. I hope you have got your money matters all settled, young man. Why need you puzzle yourself about interest, I should like to know? You haven't any money to lend, and are not likely to have any."

"How long is it since you set up for a prophet?" inquired Harry, before Louis could speak.

"My father says money earned sticks better than money given. You and I are nothing but objects of charity anyway, for every penny in our pockets was given to us, but Louis earns honestly all he has. He is the only independent one in the crowd. I dare say he will be able to buy you out, ten years from now."

"Yes, that's likely, isn't it?" John said scornfully.

"May want to borrow, if I can't lend," Louis remarked, quite undisturbed, "and I should want to know how to reckon interest for one as much as the other. Might get cheated, you know. Thanks to Miss Rawson, I'm ready for either, as far as that goes."

"Then you're all right," John said; "I'm glad to hear it. Now, if you've got that off your mind, and are sure you feel quite easy, come along, and see the Jacksons beat the Millville men. Here's Harry wouldn't stir a step till you came, and we have lost all the first of it already."

"Oh, that's too bad," Louis said, "for I can't go; I wish — no, there's no use in wishing; I can't go, Harry, though it was good of you to wait for me. But how happens it that they play to-day? I thought that match was put off. They said Tom Jackson had hurt his hand, and couldn't play."

"Nonsense!" John retorted politely; "I guess the world isn't going to stand still, just because

Tom Jackson's thumb is broken. There's plenty more men lying round loose. They're thick as blackberries, and jump at the chance. Will Adams takes Tom's place. But don't stand here talking; come along with us. It's ridiculous to say you can't go, when we know you can if you choose. Your mother won't say anything, and your father — "

"That's enough," Louis interrupted hastily, in a put-an-end-to-it tone. "You had better stop there! I can't go, I tell you. Have it that I don't choose to go, if you like it any better. It amounts to the same thing. And I'm sure I don't know what you call 'standing here talking.' I should say that we had been making pretty good time towards that ball ground. You will be there now in five minutes, if you run half as fast as you did when Mr. Leavitt's dog was after you."

John shook his fist at him in jesting menace.

"I'll talk to you when I come back, young man!" he said. "Come, Harry."

And off he ran, at the top of his speed.

"I wish you could come," Harry stayed to say. "You don't have any fun nowadays."

"Not so bad as that," Louis said as cheerfully as he could. "I shall make up for it by and by. Don't waste your time here pitying me, but catch up with John, and give the Jacksons an extra cheer, — a good loud one, — and charge it to my account."

"All right!" Harry said, and he followed John, while Louis pursued his solitary way.

He felt rather disconsolate, notwithstanding his brave words. When he turned the next corner, the sound of distant shouts reached his ears, and he could even see the black dots moving over the field, which he knew a nearer approach would resolve into the redoubtable Jacksons and the Millville nine. He had all a boy's natural longing for that game, and Conscience had a hard struggle with Inclination, to keep his feet from carrying him in that direction.

"It does seem rather hard, as Harry said, that I can't have even that little bit of fun," he said to himself, as he walked slowly on. "I don't believe there is another boy in school who couldn't go, if he wanted to. It seems to be all play for the rest, and all work for me, and I think it is pretty hard lines."

Discontent is a plant of wonderfully rapid growth, and requires very little culture. It comes up like Jonah's gourd. It was a rare thing for it to get a chance to grow at all in Louis' garden, the ground was so preoccupied with other things. But this little seed had found lodgment, and had sprung up, and was sending its tiny roots around in all directions, in search of nourishment.

Louis summoned up and put in array before himself every unpleasant thing in his lot that he could call to mind, from the unattainable ball

game to the one great trial of his life, and came to the natural conclusion that he was a very ill-used individual.

It was a most unusual frame of mind for the bright, merry boy, but clouds hide the sun sometimes from every one.

His usual brisk step had changed to a slow walk, and he even found an odd kind of satisfaction in the long list of troubles which he was able to count up. That many of them were trifles, which, in a better mood, he would laugh at, made no difference. Through blue glasses everything looks blue.

He went moodily along, noticing nothing, until he turned the last corner, and saw his mother watching for him. She was standing at the door, knitting busily, while she looked up the street. Her skilful fingers were so used to their work, that the needles seemed to fly of their own accord, with no attention from her. A quick revulsion of feeling came over Louis as he looked at her.

"What a fool I am!" he said half aloud. "Not a fellow in school has got a mother like mine. If they had, they would be glad enough of a chance to work for her. I wonder where her chance for ball games or any other fun comes in! She would enjoy some other things as much as I should that, but she never gets them. The dear little mother! If anybody has a hard time, I am sure she does, but nobody ever yet saw her sulk-

ing over it; and just look at me! With such a mother as I have got, it is a pity if I can't behave better than this. I'm glad she didn't see me coming along here, growling like a bear. She gives me credit for more sense."

The very sight of her had cleared the clouds out of his sky. He broke into his usual merry whistle, for which his little sister, from her sick bed, always listened when it was time for him to come from school; and he quickened his steps into a run which presently brought him to his mother's side.

"Here we are again!" he said; and under the influence of his repentant thoughts he gave her a rough boyish caress.

He did not often do such a thing; he did it with a kind of shy awkwardness now; but it brought a little color to her cheek, and made her heart glad.

Mothers may be very sure of their boys' love, but none the less is a little token of it, now and then, welcome to them.

"What brings you out here?" he went on. "Were you looking for me? Isn't it cooler in the house?"

"There's not much difference," she said. "The air seems very sultry anywhere. Yes, I was watching for you. You are a little later than usual, or perhaps it only seems so because I have been looking for you."

"I think it is a little late," Louis said. "Did you want me for anything?"

"Mr. Lawrence wanted you," she replied. "He stopped at the gate, as he was driving by, to ask if you would go and help to get in his hay. He thought Harry would be with you, and he was going to tell him to hurry home, and go to work. Where is he?"

"On the ball-ground," Louis said.

"Well, it can't be helped then," Mrs. Thorne said; "but he wanted both of you, for he is short of hands. I promised to send you as soon as you came. He says there is a shower coming up, and he wants the hay under cover before it gets here. You are to take your rake. I'll get it for you, while you change your jacket."

"Oh, I can't stop for that," Louis said, feeling the importance of being wanted in a hurry. "I shall have it off two minutes after I get there, and I'll take good care of it; but the rain won't wait for jackets. I'll get the rake."

"How lucky it was that I didn't go with the boys," he reflected, as he hastened off to the hay-field. "I should have lost this chance if I had. I knew the hoe wanted me, but I didn't know the rake did, or I would have hurried home, instead of dawdling along, pitying myself, in such a perfectly ridiculous way. One thing is sure — I won't be caught doing that thing again. I wish Harry had come with me, for his father will be dis-

pleased. That cloud must be made of ink, and I guess he was right about the shower's coming. How fast it moves!"

He found a busy scene at the hay-field. Mr. Lawrence had a heavy crop in what he called "first-class shape for the barn," and he was straining every nerve to get it in before the shower should come. His powerful horses drew the great loads to the barn, and came back with the empty wagons at a most inspiring pace. They really seemed to enter fully into the spirit of the thing.

The men in the field were kept busy, filling the carts with hay, pitching up great forkfuls which threatened to cover up the man who was stationed on top of the load to receive it, and who had all he could do to keep his head above it, and to place it so that it should not slide off. Some of it did reach the ground again, in spite of his efforts, and Louis and his rake were kept busy.

He enjoyed it hugely. The race with the rain was as exciting, in its way, as the ball game. Everybody was working at the top of his speed, warned by the muttering thunder, and the few large drops which began to fall, that the time was short; and when, by dint of urging his willing horses to a rapid trot, Mr. Lawrence drove the last heaped-up load under shelter, just as the rain began to come down in earnest, there was a general cheer, in which Louis' boyish treble joined heartily with the heavier voices of the men.

Margaret, by Mr. Lawrence's directions, brought out a large pitcher of "switchel," — a cool compound of molasses, vinegar, ginger, and water, — for their refreshment, and they stood around in the large barn, drinking it, cooling off after their exertions, discussing their victory, and laughing over the comic incidents of their hurry, which they could not stop to notice when they happened.

Louis thought it was very pleasant there, breathing the perfume of the sweet hay, listening to the rush of the rain without, and its continuous patter on the roof, resting after the violent exertions he had been making, and enjoying the merry talk that was going on around him.

"How perfectly soaked Harry and the rest of them must be getting!" he thought. "I do hope the Jacksons had time to beat before the deluge came."

He stood in the wide door-way, and watched the descending streams, with a delightful sense of shelter and comfort.

"There, I believe the worst of it is over," one of the men said after a while, coming to the door to look round.

"Yes," Louis agreed. "It doesn't stop raining yet, but I can almost see blue sky."

"Don't count your chickens before they are hatched," said another. "There's a pretty black cloud over there, that may have something to say about it."

"There will be a lull, anyway, before it gets ready to say anything," the first speaker replied; "and before it takes the floor for an oration, I believe I shall make a dash for home."

In fact, in a few minutes the rain did almost cease, and the men improved the opportunity to set forth.

"Stop a minute, Louis," Mr. Lawrence said, as he was going with them. "You are going off without your pay. You have worked like a hero to-day, and here's your money. And you had better take this old umbrella. You have farther to go than the others, and you may get caught, for I agree with Jack that it is going to rain again. I can't say much for the beauty of the thing; but you are not a dude, and won't mind the looks. It may be useful, if it isn't ornamental. Bring it back safe, next time you come over, for it was my grandmother's, and the old lady thought a great deal of it, though it has fallen from its high estate now, and I keep it out here, for use in an emergency."

"Thank you, sir," Louis said. "I will bring it back to-morrow."

"Is he to carry the umbrella, or is the umbrella to carry him?" asked one of the men, who had stopped to brush some of the dust off, and draw on his coat. "Hard to tell which is the biggest! If the wind blows in this style, and you spread all that sail, Louis, you will go up like a balloon!"

"Don't I wish I could? It would be great fun," Louis said, "if one could only steer."

But he started, carrying the unwieldy thing tightly furled. It was raining only a little then; but it seemed that the lull in the storm was only for the purpose of allowing the clouds to gather up their forces, for soon the torrents began to fall again. Louis trudged on, splashing through the puddles with his bare feet, and rather enjoying the whole thing.

For a considerable distance he had the street and the rain to himself, but at length he saw a lady, who had just come from a side street, standing on the sidewalk, very imperfectly shielded from the rain by a small parasol, and looking anxiously up and down the street. She evidently wanted to cross to the other side, but the heavy shower had filled the gutter until the water was too deep to be stepped into, and too wide to be jumped over.

"Why, as true as you live, it's Miss Huntington!" Louis exclaimed, and he ran to join her.

Through all the rush of the storm she heard the "slap, slap" of the boy's bare feet on the sidewalk, and turned a laughing face to greet him.

"Did you bring a boat, by any chance, Louis," she said merrily. "I'm afraid I don't know how to swim! My education in that line has been neglected, and now these two great rivers roll between me and the other sidewalk, where I must go. Can your ingenuity suggest anything?"

Louis took a view of the situation. It seemed hopeless at first. Then his eyes brightened.

"Just wait a minute, please, and hold this for me," he said, giving her the big umbrella.

"Wait for these rivers to flow by, or to dry up?" she laughed, looking down at the yellow depths at her feet. "I really don't see that I can do anything *but* wait, unless I go back."

But without staying to hear her reply, Louis was off, going back on the road by which he came.

"How the boy can run!" she commented, as he disappeared from sight. "And how little those bare feet care whether they step on land or water! He gets over the ground as if a policeman was after him, or a circus was in front of him. Where can he be going?"

Presently he came in sight again. His rate of speed was lessened somewhat, for he carried a board in his arms. It had suddenly occurred to him that he had seen carpenters at work at Mr. White's, as he passed, and he had hastened thither, and readily obtained a loan of the board.

"There!" he said, coming up, panting. "I can't carry you across, and I can't bring a boat, but I can build a bridge, so that you will go over dry shod;" and he triumphantly laid the board across the gutter, and offered his hand to steady her through the transit; then, picking it up, he crossed the street with her, and bridged the other gutter in the same way.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Sir Walter," Miss Cecil said, when she was safely on the other side.

"I'm sure you are very welcome," he returned, with instinctive politeness. "I'm only too glad of a chance to do anything for you. You won't need to cross the street again, if you are only going home, so I'll put our bridge up here by this tree until to-morrow, — it will do just as well to carry it back then, — if you will let me hold my umbrella over you. That little thing of yours is no good in this downpour, though it is rather prettier to look at than this."

"I shall be very glad," she replied cordially. "I ought not to have started, but I thought the shower was over, and I was anxious to get home. This 'little thing,' that you despise so much, was only meant for sunshine. It does its duty then perfectly, though it finds the rain too much for it. If you will take it for a minute, I will try my skill with that mighty machine of yours," she added, for he was wrestling valiantly with the long-unused spring, which refused to respond to his efforts.

"Oh, you couldn't do anything with it," he said, with a little masculine superiority. "It is as stiff as — There she comes!" as the rebellious spring unexpectedly surrendered; and in another moment the despised sunshade was closed, and the two were walking under complete shelter, while the rain poured unheeded around them.

"I feel as if I was under a cathedral roof!" Miss Cecil said, looking up at the vast expanse of faded green over her head.

"It is like carrying a tent," Louis responded. "Mr. Lawrence only said it was his grandmother's, but I think it must have come over in the Mayflower!"

"Do you know that the first man who carried an umbrella in England was laughed at?" Miss Huntington asked. "The people thought it was very unmanly to be afraid of rain, and they ridiculed him unmercifully. Indeed, I am not sure that they did not go beyond ridicule; I think I have read that they stoned him."

"Did he give in, and shut it up?" Louis asked, much interested.

"If he had, perhaps we might have been out in the rain now," she said, "instead of having the shelter of this spacious canopy. No; anything that is really useful is sure to make its way in the world, in spite of ridicule or abuse. Merit tells in the end. But I don't know whether it was possible to shut that first specimen. I am inclined to think it wasn't. I have seen pictures of it, and in comparison with them, this heirloom of Mr. Lawrence's is a model of convenience and elegance."

"Well, if it could be shut, the more they laughed, the more I would not shut it," Louis averred. "What business was it of theirs, anyway? I don't believe in being laughed out of things."

"Is that so? I'm glad to hear it," Miss Cecil said, with a half-smile. "But when you overtook me, why were you walking in the rain with a closed umbrella in your hand?"

"Oh — well — " he said, "I don't mind rain. And then it is too big for one. You see I have opened it now that there are two to walk under it."

"Yes, I see; of course you will give me your moral support, if we should happen to meet any of my friends, so that I need not mind if they laugh at this extensive green dome?" Miss Cecil suggested, with a mischievous look.

He tried to keep a grave face, but did not succeed.

"On second thoughts, I believe I won't say anything more about the Englishman," he said. "How do you always know what a fellow is thinking? Can't we talk about something else? Why did you call me Sir Walter, a little while ago?"

"I suppose I was thinking of another Englishman," she said. "You have heard of Queen Elizabeth? She came to a muddy place in the road one day, and while she hesitated about putting her foot in the mire, Sir Walter Raleigh took off his rich cloak, and threw it down for her to step on, so that she might go over dry shod. I dare say she stood looking for the best place to step, just as I was doing when you came to my relief."

"But I had no cloak for you," Louis said, "and even Sir Walter's would not have helped you over those gutters."

"Certainly not," Miss Huntington said. "Your bridge answered the purpose much better. The nineteenth century uses more sensible means than the sixteenth, but I think the knightly spirit was the same in Sir Walter Raleigh and in Louis Thorne."

"You speak as if it was a good thing," he said, laughing, "so I am glad I had it, though I'm sure I don't know what it is. I must own that all I thought of was that you wanted to get across the street."

"Exactly," she replied, "and then your first impulse was to help me to do it. Don't you know that helping ladies in distress, or, indeed, any one who was in trouble, was just what the knights of old made it their business to do?"

"Well," he said, with a shy boyish gallantry that was pleasant to see, "if they liked it as much as I do, they must have had a pleasant life! I think I should like to be a knight."

"Ah, but it cost them a good deal sometimes," she responded; "and that was not all they did. They went about the world, redressing wrongs, defending the weak against the oppression of the strong. They were gentle and courteous to women, whether they were of high or low degree; they were tender and reverent to those whom

God had afflicted; and when the trumpet sounded for battle, the knight who was so gentle and courteous in his lady's bower, showed that he could be brave and fearless in fight."

Louis drew a long breath.

"There's plenty of room in the world for such a knight now," Miss Cecil said, with full understanding of his thought, "and plenty of work for him to do. The lance he lays in rest may not be of ash and iron, and his enemies do not appear in bodily shape before him; but weapon and foe are just as real as they were in the olden time, and I think they are harder to conquer. The battle is no child's play."

"I suppose I know what you mean," Louis said, "if it is the kind of fight you were telling us of two or three weeks ago, in Sunday-school; but, for my part, I'd rather fight an enemy that I can see and touch. I should know when he was on his back then, and there would be some comfort in trying to put him there. All the enemies of the kind you mean, that I ever had anything to do with, are sure to pop up again as good as new, when I think I have killed them as dead as Julius Cæsar. They seem to have as many lives as a cat."

Miss Cecil smiled at his earnestness.

"But what kind of a knight do you think that would be," she asked, "who wanted to select his own opponents, instead of being ready to meet all

comers, and who always took care to pick out some feeble fellow whom he was sure of beating? I fancy you would be one of the first to call out, 'Shame on you! Take one of your own size!' Don't you see that the harder the fight is, the greater the victory is?"

Miss Huntington had her eyes bent on the ground instead of looking at Louis, as she talked, for some care was needed to pick her way safely among the puddles, so she was startled when his response came in the shape of a shout.

"Halloa there, you Bill Simmons! Stop that!"

And the next instant he had put the big umbrella into Miss Cecil's hands with a hasty "Take this, please; I'll be back in a minute," and before her fingers had fairly closed upon it he was off.

While she had been picking her way daintily among the puddles, his bare feet had traversed dry land and wet with equal indifference, and his eyes had been at liberty to see what was to be seen, instead of being confined to the ground, as hers had been.

So it happened that while she saw nothing, he had seen, some distance before them, two boys, who were creating amusement for themselves by dragging an unfortunate kitten through the deepest puddles they could find, and taking a cruel pleasure in its fruitless struggles and pitiful cries. A minute's sharp run brought him up to them.

"For shame!" he exclaimed, with hot indigna-

tion. "How can you be so cruel, Bill Simmons? What do you want to torment that poor thing for?"

"Who do you think you air, Mr. Louis Thorne?" the boy returned insolently. "It's no business of yours, anyway; and if you will have the goodness to look after your own affairs, I'll look after mine. The cat don't belong to you nor any of your relations."

"Nor to you!" Louis said, at a venture. "And it is my business, and always will be, to stop such cruelty whenever I see it, if it is a possible thing."

The poor kitten could not have understood the dialogue, but by some unknown means it did seem to understand that it had found a defender, for it crawled feebly up to him, and laid its head down upon his foot.

No words could have made a more eloquent appeal. It went to Louis' heart. He felt that the helpless creature trusted itself to him, and he silently resolved to prove himself worthy of the trust. He stooped to pick it up, but his opponent only laughed. "Yes, all that's very fine, I dare say, but you see 'taint a 'possible thing' this time. It takes two to make a bargain," he said, sneeringly, and as he spoke he pulled the string which was round the poor thing's neck, with such a sudden jerk that the sharp claws, by whose means it was trying to hold itself back, passed over Louis' bare foot, and left a bloody line behind

them, while the innocent cause of the injury was floundering desperately in a deep pool.

"Did its darling pet pussy scratch it with its cunning little claws?" Simmons said tauntingly. "Guess you'll be content to let the cat alone now!"

For all answer, Louis caught at the string and pulled the kitten out at the risk of choking it, receiving a blow in the face in return. In another minute the two boys were wrestling together, not according to the rules of the ring, but in true boyish fashion, with more good will than science.

Bill Simmons was a little the larger of the two; but still they were fairly well matched, so that each felt he had a chance for victory, and meant to win it. With arms tightly locked around each other, they swayed back and forth, each using his utmost efforts either to throw his opponent down by main strength, or to trip him up by a skilful turn.

The struggle lasted a minute or two, and then both boys were down in the mud; but that did not appear to trouble them. Through the whole contest neither of them said a word. They had no breath to waste in talking.

But by the time Cecil reached them, with a remonstrance upon her lips, Louis had got the upper hand. He held the other boy firmly down, and demanded: —

"Will you cry 'enough,' or do you want some more?"

There was a little delay in answering, and the victor tightened his hold, to show that he was in condition to dictate the terms of surrender. The hint was sufficient.

"'Nuff!" was the response, sulkily given.

"And will you promise to let the cat alone?" Louis stipulated.

"What do I want of your old cat?" Bill Simmons growled. "You may keep her in a glass case, for all I care."

"All right, then," Louis said; and considering his victory complete, he released his captive, who lost no time in taking his departure, muttering threats as he went.

The smaller boy, instead of supporting his companion, had fled at the beginning of the fray.

Louis was picking his hat out of the water, when Miss Huntington came upon the scene.

"Can this be you, fighting in this way, Louis?" she said with a shocked voice. "What had that boy done to you, that you should rush at him and attack him like that? I can hardly believe my own eyes."

Like too many other people, Cecil Huntington sometimes jumped to a conclusion, when she knew only half the facts in the case. Louis had left her abruptly, and the next moment she saw him fighting, and it certainly looked to her like a clear case of unprovoked assault. Still, it was unlike anything she had seen of Louis before, and she could

not imagine why he should leave her in such a way, and rush so suddenly into such a fight, unless it was only the continuation of some boyish quarrel.

Louis looked surprised at her tone of reproof, and exclaimed: —

"Why, Miss Huntington!"

Then, as her meaning dawned upon him, he laughed a little at the idea of his caring enough for his late opponent to quarrel with him.

"I've nothing to do with Bill Simmons, one way or another, as a general thing," he said; "and I didn't 'rush at him' on my own account. I'll show you the reason, if you will wait a minute — if I can find it!"

He began to look about for the innocent cause of the combat. The poor kitten was too much exhausted at the treatment it had received, to go far, and after some searching he discovered it behind a clump of bushes, where it had taken refuge, and brought it to Miss Cecil.

"They were killing it by inches," he explained, "when I saw them, and I couldn't stand it, so I rushed to the rescue."

Miss Cecil was mollified at once.

"Oh, the poor little thing!" she exclaimed compassionately.

It was a most forlorn object, half-starved, bedraggled, half-choked by the cord still tied round its neck, and mewing piteously.

"If we could only get that string off," Louis said; "but I haven't got a knife."

"Nor I," said Miss Cecil. "We must untie it."

Louis was doubtful of their ability to do it; but he took the umbrella from her, and held the kitten, while she struggled with the knot. It was a work of time, for it had been tightly drawn, and the string was wet; but she accomplished it at last, and then took the miserable animal into her own keeping.

Louis hesitated about going on with her, and looked doubtfully at his muddy clothes, not thinking himself fit to walk beside her; but she soon disposed of his scruples.

"It is only the stains of the battle-field," she said. "I am glad there is nothing more than water can wash away. Now, I call that a knightly deed," she said, as they walked on. "That was a good beginning, Louis; I beg your pardon for thinking you were doing wrong: I ought to have known better."

"Oh, that's all right," Louis said hastily. "I suppose it did look queer, and I couldn't stop to explain. But I thought you meant people when you said knights 'defended the weak.' Did you mean cats?"

"Cats, or anything else needing defence which you can give," she answered. "I am sure this poor thing was weak, and was glad to have you use your strength for her."

"She's very welcome," Louis said, stroking the little helpless creature curled up warmly in Miss Huntington's arms. "She won't be half a bad-looking kitten when she gets dry, and fats up a little. But I really think it would be a comfort when one was doing a knightly thing, to know it. I have blundered into it twice, it seems; but it is no credit to me, for I did not even know it until you told me. And you see I don't know what to look for! I can't always find a cat to save from Bill Simmons, or be lucky enough to meet you in a muddy street."

"Thank you," she said, smiling. "I can't promise to get caught in showers, to give you an opportunity to show your chivalry. Your chance will probably come in some other shape the next time. It will not always be forlorn cats, or distressed damsels, but you will know it when you see it. The Golden Rule is a good motto for a modern knight. When you can do for another anything that you would like to have done for you, there's your chance. But here I am at home, and I suppose I must give your kitten up to you. Only see how cosily she has curled down on my arm; the warmth must comfort her, for she has actually begun to purr. She would be very pretty if she was not so thin."

"But I am sure I do not know what to do with her," Louis said, in some perplexity. "I don't think I ought to take her home. My mother would not want her."

"Then perhaps you will let me keep her," Miss Cecil said quickly. "I was sorry to give her up, even to you; but you had the first right to her. She is the captive of your lance and spear, you know; so she is at your disposal, Sir Louis. She owes her life to you."

"Then I will make my rights over to you," he said gladly. "If she is a sensible cat, she will be very willing to be half drowned for the sake of getting such a home. I hope you are not very wet. Good by."

"Good by," she returned, "and many thanks to you. You are wet, if I am not, and you must hurry home, and get on dry clothes. Otherwise, you should come in, and see our kitty made comfortable. But I shall see you in our Sunday-school class to-morrow, and you shall hear of her welfare. I intend to make her look like another creature in a few days."

With a little gesture of adieu, she went into the house, and Louis pursued his homeward way. The shower seemed to have settled down into a steady rain, but he did not notice it.

He was thinking how fortunate he had been in overtaking Miss Cecil, and having his pleasant walk with her. All the boys of her class were glad of a chance to do anything for her. He wished some of them had seen her walking under his umbrella with him.

Then he began to think how much the history

of the afternoon would interest his little sister, who had to take all her glimpses of out-door life through his eyes.

He would tell her, too, what Miss Cecil had said about the knights. He meant to be one. If it was only keeping the Golden Rule, surely he could. It would be very easy, so far as he could see, and very pleasant.

But just at this point the course of his thoughts received a sudden check.

A little way in front of him, he saw a fat Irish woman trudging along in the rain. She was pushing before her a little cart, evidently of home manufacture, for it was constructed of a shoe box mounted on wheels. In one end of it was a basket of soiled clothes, which she was taking home to wash, while in the other end sat a baby, rather crowded by the basket, and made so uncomfortable by the rain that it kept up a steady wailing cry.

The mother was a big, good-natured, untidy-looking woman. Louis knew her. It was Maggie O'Brien, who supported her husband and children by her daily work, doing washing and house cleaning.

His first thought was one of amusement at the unconcerned way in which she walked through the rain; his second, one of compassion, as he saw how wet both she and the baby were, and remembered that she had been working hard all day; his third,

"'Wouldn't you like to take this umbrella?'"—P. 33.

of his big umbrella, and of a knight's duty in the circumstances.

It had been a great pleasure to escort Miss Huntington, but walking with Mrs. O'Brien was quite another thing. Still, there she was in the rain, and he had shelter for her.

"Gentle and courteous to women, Miss Cecil said," he reflected, "whether they were of high or low degree. I suppose that means to be polite to a woman just because she *is* a woman, whether she is a lady or this big washerwoman. Then there's that Golden Rule business. Well — at least I'm not obliged to walk with her! I'm too wet to mind a little more rain, and it may wash off some of the mud."

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He hastened his steps a little, and soon overtook her.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. O'Brien," he said politely. "You seem to be getting wet. Wouldn't you like to take this umbrella?"

Mrs. O'Brien turned her round red face to him, shining with good-nature and rain-drops. He saw that she was pushing the cart with one hand, while she held two or three bundles under her shawl with the other.

"Is it takin' it I'd be, and lave yez out in the rain?" she answered. "Av coorse not; but sure it's a fine big wan, and there's room for the two of us undher it. I'll be obliged to ye for a piece of it, and ye'll have plinty lift for yersilf."

Louis' face was a study; but he did not know how to refuse the kindness which she took so completely for granted, and concealing his reluctance, of which he was somewhat ashamed, he walked beside her. But the good woman was much taller than her young escort, and as he carried the umbrella, it was continually hitting her head, so she presently proposed that he should give it to her to carry, while he pushed the little cart.

"Pretty business this!" he thought, as they made the exchange. "If there is anything knightly about it, I don't see it. I only hope we shan't meet any of the boys. I should never hear the last of it. Luckily, we are almost at the O'Brien mansion."

He looked down the street, but no one was in sight; so he felt more at his ease, and began to talk to his companion.

She had been cleaning house, she said, at Judge Goodwin's, and she had to take the baby with her, because the father was sick, and couldn't be bothered with it.

"I don't think I could blame a sick man for not wanting to have it about, if it cries like this all the time," Louis said, eyeing the wailing child with a certain disfavor.

"Sure, he don't, then," the mother said eagerly. "Whisht, Mike, will ye? He's as good as gold, most times. There hasn't been a word out of his mouth all the afternoon; but now he's hungry, and he's wet like, and the crature hasn't the sinse to

know what's the matther. Whist, now, will ye, Mike?"

But no; Mike declined to whisht, and only raised his voice higher, until his mother took him out of the cart, filling his place there with her bundles. Louis thought it was pretty hard for the tired woman to carry the heavy child, but even with the Golden Rule in mind, one must draw the line somewhere, and he drew it at carrying Mike in the street. His mother did not seem to think him a burden; she held him close against her warm bosom, and he presently snuggled down contentedly, and forgot his discomfort in sleep. At his best, no one but his mother would have called him a pretty baby, but Louis thought he looked much better asleep than awake.

They had reached the gate; in another minute he would have seen his companions in the house, and been walking on alone, when a group of his schoolmates overtook them, announcing their presence by a laugh.

"Louis Thorne is going in to get washed and ironed," said one. "Looks as if he needed it."

"Quite a family party, I declare," said another. "Didn't know Louis could do the paternal so well."

"Been to Howe's to have their pictures taken, I suppose," suggested another.

"How much the dear baby looks like its papa," remarked another.

Louis was half inclined to be vexed, but his good sense came to his aid, and he did a wiser thing; he joined in the laugh. Mrs. O'Brien was as much amused as any one.

"It's a rale gintleman, even if it was a little wan, that Mike would have for his papa thin," she said, shaking her fat sides. "It wouldn't hurt his beauty if he was the moral of him too. It isn't every wan of yez who would be so willing to help a poor woman!"

"That's so," the boys responded. "He's a brick, and you're another, Maggie."

"Thank ye kindly," she said, as Louis drew the cart up before her door. "It's your wife, when you're big enough to get her, that'll be the lucky gurl. An' if iver ye want any help that Maggie O'Brien can give, ye need only whisper, and she'll come."

"Oh, that's all right. You are welcome," Louis said; and he ran home, feeling quite sure that her gratitude for the little kindness outweighed the boys' ridicule.

His mother's face was a study when she saw him.

"What is the matter, Louis?" she exclaimed. "What can you have been doing? How late you are, and how you look! Do you know what a figure you are? Where have you been?"

"How I look?" Louis repeated.

Then he glanced down at himself, stepped up

to the looking-glass, and gave an involuntary whistle. In the scuffle with Bill Simmons his jacket had been badly torn, and both jacket and trousers showed the effect of that roll in the mud, to which the wearer had been so indifferent. He was dismayed, but he hastily explained to his mother, while he pulled off the jacket.

"I wonder that Miss Huntington was willing to be seen with such a disreputable-looking boy," Mrs. Thorne said, examining the rents. "As for Maggie O'Brien, she is used to rags and dirt, but I think even she must have been a little ashamed of her escort."

Louis laughed a little consciously, quite aware that the shame, with much less reason, had been upon the other side.

"It is fortunate that I shall have time to mend it to-night," his mother said, threading her needle as she spoke, "and you will have to take brush and sponge in hand."

"If I could only get a new one — a truly new one, I mean," he said, after watching her a minute, "I should like it. This one never was new, you know, because it was made out of an old coat in the beginning. It must be tired of living, and I don't wonder that it gave up when Bill Simmons laid his hands on it."

"I know, but there is no use in your thinking of a new one," his mother said, shaking her head. "It is entirely out of the question. I am only

thankful that you have this one, forlorn as it looks now, and you must make it last as long as possible, though I am afraid it will not look very much better after I have done my best for it."

"That's rather hard," Louis said soberly; "for even your fingers can never make that thing look decently again."

"It is a pity that you did not change it for the other before you went to the hay-field," she said.

"But the other really is not fit to be seen," he interrupted.

"It would have saved this," she said, "and now you will have to be content with some patches and darns, and the worst of it is, that I have no pieces like it."

He made a wry face; then seeing that his mother was really troubled about it, he forced a laugh, and said: —

"Oh well, I guess I can stand it until our ship comes in. We'll hope people will think it is some new kind of embroidery!"

"It's a kind that will never be very popular," Mrs. Thorne said, rummaging in her piece-bag. "But a darn or a patch is better than a hole, since we can only choose the least of the two evils. Now, your bread and milk is ready for you in the pantry, and when you have eaten it, go in to see Freda. She has been watching a long time for you."

"Then I'll take my milk in there, and eat my supper with her," Louis said.

He came back with his bowl of milk and a plate of bread, and went into his little sister's room with them.

"Here we are, Freda!" he said gayly. "Would you like to have a tea-party here, without the tea, and without the party? Because the tea is only milk, and the party is only me!"

"It is all the better," the little girl said, raising herself in bed, with her eyes brightening, and a little color coming in her pale cheeks. "I don't want any more party than just you, yourself. Sit down here, please, where I can see you, while you eat your supper, and tell me all you have been doing."

"The telling can wait better than the eating, I guess," he said, drawing his chair up beside the bed. "I've got quite a long story for you to-night, about umbrellas, and cats, and Irish babies; but you will have to exercise patience for a little while. You have no idea how hungry I am. I believe I could eat six such bowls of bread and milk if I had them. It is lucky that you are so thin, or I might turn cannibal and eat you!"

"How nice it must be to be so hungry," Freda said wistfully, watching the swift journeys of the spoon between the bowl and his mouth. It seemed strange to her that any one could care for food; but Louis ate as if he relished every mouthful. Her own meals were only a trouble to her, since she had no appetite, and yet wanted to please her mother by eating as much as she could.

"Nice to be hungry?" Louis repeated, scraping the last crumbs from his bowl. "Well, I don't know. That depends on whether you can get supper enough. It would be worse for you than for me, you see, because you haven't got a little sister to eat! I think small appetites must be convenient sometimes. Harry said this noon that he was hungry enough to eat an ox behind the horns; but then, if you haven't got the ox to eat, you know, there you are! Never mind; you'll be hungry enough soon, when you are able to go out doors again. I just wish you could have been with me this afternoon."

Therewith he plunged into a history of his day, going into all sorts of little particulars, down to the color of the kitten, and the funny cap, with a button on the top for a handle, that Mike O'Brien wore, so that he made quite a long story of it. It was not too long for Freda, however, as he well knew, and she listened to it all with the deepest interest.

This was the happiest hour of the twenty-four to the poor invalid child; she looked forward to it all day long; and Louis, on his side, had formed the habit of treasuring up all the little events of the day for her amusement, and never went into her room without a bright face.

He would have opened his blue eyes in astonishment if Miss Huntington had told him that he was doing the *devoir* of a true knight in doing this, but it was none the less true.

CHAPTER II.

"At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had looked so mean.
For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seemed
The dress that now she looked on, to the dress
She looked on ere the coming of Geraint."

— TENNYSON'S *Enid.*

"COME, my son," Mrs. Thorne said, opening the door of Louis' room, Sunday morning. "It is high time that you were up and dressed. Breakfast is almost ready."

"Why, mother!" he exclaimed, feeling very much ashamed of himself; but she had gone, and there was nothing to be done but to dress as quickly as possible.

When there is no work to be done at an early hour, it makes less difference if one does consult only his own wishes, instead of the clock; but Louis had something to do, and was conscious that he had neglected it. In every family the work that one, self-indulgently, leaves undone, some other, self-sacrificingly, must do, or the machinery of the household would soon be in confusion.

Louis did not belong to the class of boys who

like to throw their burdens upon others whenever it is possible. Lighting the fire in the kitchen was one of his regular morning duties; then he filled the tea-kettle, laid the breakfast-table, and made the coffee. He took great pleasure in helping his mother in this way. It was nothing that she required of him, but was the voluntary service of love.

He remembered her surprise the first day that she found everything ready for her, and the resolve he had made then, that she should always find it so; and he was ashamed that he had left her to take up her old tasks this morning. He knew she had been at work for him until almost midnight.

He could not even plead that he had overslept, for he had been wide awake for a long time; only, instead of springing up, according to his custom, as soon as his eyes were fairly open, he had been lying quietly in bed, gazing at the clothes which he ought to have been putting on, and lost in thought concerning them.

He hurried them on now, and ran down stairs. He found his breakfast waiting; and, after disposing of it with his usual healthy morning appetite, he made the only apology possible for his lateness by confessing the truth.

"It's all owing to these clothes, mother, — my Sunday-every-day suit," he said.

He had faithfully tried the virtues of sponge

and brush to remove the traces of yesterday's mishap, and his mother's skilful needle had done its best in repairing damages; but, after all their pains, the result was far from satisfactory to him. No skill could make the old look like new.

"I lay there, looking at the old things, till I fairly got into a rage with them," he said, half laughing; "and so I forgot all about the fire and everything else. My mind won't hold two ideas at once. It isn't that you haven't done the very best that anybody could do with them, mother dear, but only look at me!"

He stood up that she might take in the whole effect.

"Do you wonder that I hate to go about looking so shabby?" he said.

"Do you think I like to have you? I would help it if I could," Mrs. Thorne said, beginning to gather up her dishes. "But I would rather have you shabby outside than in. I would not think about it any more to-day, since it can't be helped. It is fortunate that 'your mind won't hold two ideas at a time.' Fill it so full of something else that there will be no room for jackets in it. You haven't any too much time to study your Sunday-school lesson before the bell rings. Just take your book into Freda's room, and study there, while I get her breakfast ready."

"I'd rather stay with her to-day. I can get my lesson just the same, and recite it to you," he said,

with a quick glance to see how the suggestion was received. "I don't think I feel quite well to-day, besides; and I'd rather stay at home,"

"Oh, indisposed?" Mrs. Thorne said, with a little twitch in the corners of her mouth. "I have heard your Uncle Charles say, that when he was in college, a student went to Professor Dure, to get excused from church on your plea. The professor pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, to see him better, and said in his squeaky voice: 'Ah! Indisposed? Is it a physical or a mental indisposition, young gentleman?' I think yours must be mental. Your good appetite a few minutes ago was not a symptom of very severe illness."

"But I think my head does ache a little," Louis persisted, putting his hand to his forehead, as if to assure himself of the fact.

"Does it? Then you must be taken care of before it gets worse," she said gravely. "Of course you can't go to church. There is nothing like taking things in time, and I can't afford to have you sick just now. You had better go back to bed, and I will get a dose of castor oil for you before I wash my dishes."

Louis made a wry face, but he could not help laughing; and his mother laughed with him.

"I guess we'll do without that horrid stuff this time," he said. "The very thought of it would frighten away the worst ache I ever had. But

truly, mother, I don't want to go to church in this rig. It was bad enough before, when it was only half outgrown; but Bill Simmons' handling has not improved it. I didn't think I was going to pay such a price for my kitten. You don't know how nice the other boys look; and I should feel like a tramp among them, all shrunk up and patched up and darned up!"

Mrs. Thorne did not answer for a minute or two. She seemed to be considering, and he hoped his arguments had convinced her.

"I am as sorry about it as you can be, Louis," she said at last. "I should like to have my boy dressed as well as his mates; and if we could afford it, you should have a new suit to-morrow. I meant to get you one this week. But now I am afraid it will be a good while before we have money enough for that. And, in the meantime, saying nothing of the right and wrong of it, I am sure you don't want to stay away from church and Sabbath-school and day-school, and hide yourself at home week after week, just for a shabby jacket?"

"Why, no," Louis admitted; "I shouldn't like to do that."

"Then isn't it better to face the trouble bravely at the outset?" she asked. "Would it be any easier next week?"

"Why, no," he said again. "But I am sure I could earn some of the money myself, so it need not be very long."

His mother shook her head.

"I have something unpleasant to tell you," she said. "While you were away yesterday, Mr. Brown called for my bonnets; but he did not bring me any more straw. He said Craig & Harris had failed. The shop was going to be closed, and no more work would be given out."

"No more straw work!" Louis exclaimed in dismay. "But, mother, what are we going to live on? What shall we do?"

"I don't know yet," she said; "but since we must live on something, we must find a way to earn it. We won't give up so soon as this. There's always some way out of every trouble. And isn't it a good thing that I have my boy to help me out of this?" she said, patting his shoulder. "I did not mean to tell you the bad news to-day; but you can see now that it is no time for us to think of new clothes, no matter how much we need them. The money I had saved for your new suit, and whatever either of us can earn, will have to go for other things. You see why I am thankful that you have even a patched jacket."

"Well," Louis said, summoning up his courage, and determining not to be wanting in giving the help on which his mother seemed to rely, "I guess, between us, we can manage it. There's the rent, for we must have a roof over our heads. And something to eat must come first, that's plain, when a fellow has such an outrageous appe-

tite as I have. I do believe I eat five times as much as you do. Why didn't you tell me before breakfast?"

"I should be frightened if you did not eat more than I do," Mrs. Thorne said, smiling at his odd tone of self-reproach. "Remember that you have to provide food for growth. You need not lay any plans for semi-starvation, for I shall not consent to them. I am glad to see my boy growing into a strong, vigorous man, and so I mean he shall have enough to eat, though it will have to be very plain food for awhile. That may be no misfortune in the end; plain, simple food is healthy, and, at the worst, I am sure we can get enough bread and milk and oatmeal to supply our needs."

"And if I can't find a way to earn my share of it, and a little more, I shall deserve to go hungry," Louis said. "Perhaps Mr. Lawrence will have some more work for me; or, if he doesn't, I can go berrying."

"There will be time enough to see about that to-morrow," his mother said. "Try not to think of it to-day. And don't think about your jacket more than you can help. If anything reminds you of it, just remember that you have no right to dress better than you can afford, and have no right to stay away from church, as long as your clothes are decent, just because they are not as nice as you would like them to be, or as other people's are. A patch is better than a debt, and the condi-

tion of the jacket isn't of so much importance as the condition of the heart it covers. You may be very sure that you think about your clothes much more than any one else thinks about them!"

"I'm all right while I'm listening to you, and I think I can face anybody, but I know very well that when I am out of your sight — and *in* other people's! — it will be another thing. However, matters might be worse," Louis said, looking over himself. "Nobody can say that these are not whole and clean. If I could only keep from outgrowing them so fast!"

"We will hope that we shall get out of this dark place into the light," Mrs. Thorne answered cheerfully, "before you have time to outgrow them much more. And in the meantime, you have a chance to show that you are not a coward. I think it is very possible that some of the boys may laugh at you. Show that you are not afraid of a laugh. Be brave enough to go straight on your own way."

"There's Miss Cecil's knight again," Louis thought. "I suppose this is the shape my chance takes this time, but a stand-up fight with Bill Simmons would be nothing to it."

Aloud, he only said, "All right, mother, I'll try, but don't expect too much from me, or you may be disappointed. Now, since I'm going to church, the first thing must be this lesson."

He took his books into Freda's room, as his mother had suggested, and did his best to fix his thoughts on the lesson. He was not expected to amuse Freda now. Her mother knew that his mere presence in the room would be pleasure enough for her. To the little invalid child, the nearness of the strong, healthy boy was a delight; his stories of the little happenings of every day, of his amusements and companions, were better than fairy tales. He seemed to impart to her some of his own overflowing vitality.

She knew that he was busy this morning, and she was perfectly contented to lie still, and look at him without interrupting him. When he had plenty of time Sunday morning, he often made her happy by asking her to find some references for him, the idea of helping him was so delightful to her; but he was in too much haste for that to-day, and he studied in silence until the church bells began to ring. Then he gathered up his books.

"Good-by, Freda," he said. "It has been dull music for you this morning, but we'll make up for it by and by. I shall get a nice book from the library, and read it to you when I come home."

It gave him no trouble to say the few kind words, but they were enough to make his little sister's eyes sparkle with pleasure, and the promise gave her something to anticipate, and brightened the whole day for her.

It did not once occur to him that he had done another knightly deed. He would have been the first to laugh at the idea. Yet the true chivalric spirit had prompted him, the protecting tenderness of strength to weakness.

CHAPTER III.

VERY few people were in the church when Louis reached it, for he had purposely started a little earlier than usual, with that end in view. No one seemed to take any notice of him, and he hastened to shelter himself in his pew, where he felt safe from observation, and could occupy himself with watching others come in.

When the services began, he soon forgot all his troubles. He was very fond of music, and two or three of his favorite stirring hymns were sung. He listened for Miss Huntington's voice, he liked so much to hear that, and she even gave him a tiny nod in the midst of the exultant strains of "The year of jubilee has come," which said to him as plainly as words, "We enjoy this, don't we?"

Then a strange minister came in with Mr. Russell, and preached for him. He proved to be a missionary from India, and instead of a sermon, he gave them a familiar talk, which Louis liked much better. He told a great many interesting things about the religion, and customs, and ways of living, of the Hindoos, and Louis listened eagerly, not only on his own account, but for his mother and Freda, for he wanted to be able to tell them about the strange things he had heard.

"What a silly fellow I should have been if I had stayed at home, and lost all this, just for this old jacket!" he remarked confidentially to himself. "It is a good thing for me that my mother has more sense than I have. She said I thought more about my clothes than anybody else did, and it seems to be true, for everybody has been listening with all his ears, and nobody has looked at me, or cared whether I am dressed in rags or velvet!"

Miss Huntington made it a rule to be always early in her place in Sunday-school, ready to welcome the members of her class as they came in, and, perhaps in consequence of this custom, they generally came so punctually that there was time for a chat of two or three minutes before the school was called to order.

She used this time to make them feel that she was interested in everything that concerned them. To-day she asked Harry Lawrence about his brother, who had just come home after a year's absence in California; congratulated Willie Russell, who was the proud possessor of the first of the school prizes; inquired about George Baker's mother, who had been sick; and said to Louis: —

"Our kitten is doing nicely. She has quite recovered from yesterday's shock, and seems to feel perfectly at home. She is going to be very pretty. You must come and see how Ulla pets her, and what cunning ways she has."

"You say 'our kitten,' as if it was common

property," Harry remarked. "Have you gone into partnership with Louis?"

"I suppose that is about it," she said, "as far as that bit of very movable property is concerned. We own it together."

She had just time to tell the story of the kitten's rescue before the bell rang for the opening exercises. Talking longer was against the rules then; but the boys managed to convey a sense of their interest and approbation to Louis by significant looks and gestures, before they gave their attention to the superintendent.

Speeches from visitors were not regarded with much favor in that school. Dr. Gardiner held the opinion that the teachers and scholars came there for their lessons, and wanted the time for them.

But to-day the preacher of the morning was allowed to speak to the children for five minutes. It seemed a very short time; but he wasted none of it in apology or preface, and really contrived to pack a good deal into it.

Then the primary class went to its room, and the usual business of the hour began. A hum of voices rose all over the room.

In Miss Huntington's class, the first thing was an explanation of something in last week's lesson. A question had been asked which she found herself unable to answer on the spur of the moment; and she had promised to look the matter up, and report to-day.

Then she occasionally gave special topics to two or three members of the class, who were to find out all they could about them. Sometimes they found very little, but at other times they really did very well. Their report came before the lesson was taken up, and always seemed to excite their interest in it.

To-day their lesson was upon the heroism of Daniel. Willie Russell gave a little sketch of his life, Louis described his character, and Harry was called upon for points in which he was a model for imitation. The others added their suggestions, until the old prophet began to seem a real man to them, instead of only a character in a book; and they took hold of the lesson, to learn something more about him, with great zest.

Dr. Gardiner smiled as he glanced at them, while he was going about the room, from class to class, attending to his duties as superintendent. They were talking eagerly, now turning to their Bibles for references, then looking up at Miss Huntington again, and evidently were very much interested.

"There's no need of any further anxiety about those boys," he said to himself. "Cecil has found the key that the other teachers failed to find. Somebody ought to recognize my wisdom in putting her in that place, for that bit of credit certainly belongs to me. I fancy her boys agree with me in thinking her 'wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best,'

— and sweetest — of women! They are very sensible boys!"

When the warning-bell struck, the class whose judgment was so highly esteemed by the superintendent was still in full tide of talk; but their teacher checked them.

"There is the bell. We shall have to stop here," she said.

"That bell is always ringing just when nobody wants to hear it," Horace grumbled. "I should like to steal it!"

"I think Dr. Gardiner has put us on a short allowance of time to-day," Harry said, turning half round to see the clock.

"No; we have had as much time as usual," Miss Cecil said; "but we have only a minute more now. Willie, after all our talk about Daniel, can you tell me the one chief thing of which he is an example to us?"

"Unflinching loyalty to God," Willie said promptly, "at all times and places, without thinking of consequences."

"That is it," said his teacher. "Loyalty in things that seem trifling, as well as in those that seem more important; in things that led to disgrace and danger, as well as those that led to reward and honor. His motto, if he had one, might have been 'Love and Loyalty before all.' And that is the reason why that most honorable of all honorable titles was given to him by the angel

with whom he talked. 'Daniel, man greatly beloved.' I wish we might all follow his example: make the law of God our rule of life as he did, and be as earnest and resolute in obeying it."

Then she gave out the topics for report for the next lesson, and finished with an invitation for the class to spend an evening at her house during the week. Harry Lawrence acted as spokesman for all, and thanked her in courteous terms; for she treated them like gentlemen, and they felt bound to live up to the idea which they saw she had of them.

Several were engaged elsewhere for the evening which she first named, and she made a change.

"Let us see," she said. "I have an engagement myself for to-morrow night, but the next night — Are you all free Tuesday night? Then that will do, and I will expect you all at seven o'clock."

The school was dismissed, and Louis was in the street again before it occurred to him that he had not once thought of the thing which had troubled him so much in the morning. When the measure is full of wheat, there is no room for chaff, and Miss Huntington had kept his thoughts busy with other things.

But the sore subject was brought to his remembrance now, by his happening to see Fanny Ray shrug her shoulders as she looked at him, and then whisper something to her sister, at which they both laughed.

He tried to remember his mother's counsel, and to convince himself that he did not care what they said, or how much they laughed at him, but the attempt was rather a failure, for he knew he did care. Pretty Fanny Ray had but little idea how much her thoughtless laugh had hurt him.

He was brooding over it, and unconsciously hurrying to get home as soon as possible, when he heard a low whistle behind him, and then his own name, and he turned to see Harry Lawrence coming up at a brisk walk.

"What a hurry you are in, old fellow!" Harry said, falling into step with him. "Why didn't you wait for me? I couldn't get to you when we came out of school, because everybody stopped me, and wanted to ask about Richard, and to hear how he liked California. They couldn't possibly wait till they saw him, and let him speak for himself! And I have been trying to overtake you, ever since you turned the corner, but the more steam I put on, the more you did, so you kept just so far ahead of me, and I began to think I should have to shock Miss Jones by breaking into a run. Whom were you trying to catch?"

"Nobody. I didn't know that I was walking any faster than usual," Louis said.

"Training for a pedestrian contest in the Rink, I should think," Harry returned. "Come, suppose you slow up now. There's no hurry, and it's too hot to go at this rate. I say, isn't Miss Hunting-

ton splendid? We are in luck, after having such a time with our teachers, handed over from one to another like a bad penny, to get her at last."

"That's a fact," Louis agreed.

"I don't believe any of us will forget Daniel in a hurry, after to-day," Harry went on. "For my part, I almost feel as if I had known him sometime. I had no idea that there was so much in that lesson, and I gave it some extra study, too. Besides, wasn't she good about your kitten? Miss Jones would have lectured you for half an hour on the sin of fighting to get it, and here Miss Cecil just takes the poor thing home in her own arms, and feeds it herself, I'll be bound. She spoke as if she really cared for it. I do hope you gave that rascally Bill Simmons what he deserved?"

"No, I don't think I did," Louis said, laughing. "It would be a long job, he deserves so much! But he gave up the kitten, and he said he had enough."

"He'll come in for the rest some day," Harry comforted himself. "He's just aching for a good thrashing, and I should like to see him get it! I don't take much stock in his idea of 'enough'; I should be liberal for once, and give him more than he wanted. But then, such people are pretty apt to get their deserts, sooner or later. He didn't hurt you, did he?"

"No; it was my jacket that was hurt," Louis said rather ruefully, showing the scars of the com-

bat; "and I think I would rather have had it myself, under the circumstances!"

Harry whistled under his breath.

"Did he do that?" he said. "I wondered what made you come to church in that style."

Then as he saw Louis color painfully, he realized the blunder he had made, and gave himself a mental shake for his heedlessness. He hastened to say the most consoling thing he could think of at the moment, trying to atone for his thoughtless words, like the good-hearted boy that he was.

"Never mind, old fellow," he said, clapping his shoulder; "I don't believe another person there noticed it. I shouldn't myself, most likely, only I sat next to you in class, you know. People have something else to do, besides looking at us."

"If you had seen Fanny and Carrie Ray just now, you wouldn't say that," Louis said bitterly. "They know when a boy looks decently. I should think you would be ashamed to be seen walking with me."

"I'm not, then! And girls!" Harry said in a tone of great contempt. "What do we care for a parcel of girls? All they think of is crimping and prinking."

"Excepting Lily Russell, I suppose," said Louis.

Harry laughed a little, but went on:—

"And I do think Fanny Ray is the silliest of the lot. What need you care for what she says, I should like to know? Any fool can buy a dandy

jacket, if he has got money enough, but everybody with any sense knows that the boy inside the jacket is the main thing."

"I know the boy inside doesn't enjoy it much," Louis said.

"See here," said Harry, "can you tell what a single boy in the class had on to-day, from cap to shoe?"

"No," Louis answered, "I can't; but I know there was a row of nicely dressed boys, and a shabby fellow at the end of it, who looked as if he had no business to be with them."

"Did they act as if they thought so?" demanded Harry. "I should like to know if you think you are treating the rest of us fairly? Do you mean to hint that you would take the other side of the road, if you had worn a new jacket to church, and I had an old one? No, I thought not. Then why can't you believe that other people have as much sense as you? As long as you are yourself, Louis Thorne, I don't think anybody is going to be ashamed to be seen with you, even if you have to wear a blanket, Mexican fashion, with a hole cut in the middle to put your head through."

"It may come to that yet," Louis said, laughing in spite of himself, and feeling much comforted by Harry's tirade, "for I don't see any prospect of getting a new jacket at present."

"Well," Harry said, "then we'll be thankful that you've got this. It will last a while longer,

till you can get another, and you must let me fight the next battle for kittens. You won't need that blanket just yet, so don't lie awake nights thinking about it. Good by till to-morrow, old fellow."

And he turned off to take the short cut through the fields to his own home, singing cheerily as he went, for his own pleasure, and for Louis' comfort, the words they had sung in Sunday-school that day: —

> "Dare to be a Daniel,
> Dare to stand alone!
> Dare to have a purpose firm,
> Dare to make it known!"

Louis looked after the straight, slender figure, in its trim Sunday suit, and only when he was quite sure that his friend was well out of hearing, remarked to him: —

"Oh, it's very easy for you to talk! I dare say I could do it in your place; but you don't know how it feels."

Still, his heart felt lighter. Sympathy may not lift an ounce, but yet it does help the burden-bearer. He went into the house with a much more cheerful face than it had seemed possible, a little while before, that he could show. He met his mother's questioning look with a smile, chatted cheerfully while he ate his dinner, repeated as much of the address and the Sunday-school lesson as he could remember, to his mother and sister,

and at last sat down to read the promised book to Freda.

Anxiety for the future was weighing on his mother's heart; but Louis was only a boy, and the trouble or the pleasure of the present still sufficed for him. His book proved to be an interesting one, and reader and listener were soon absorbed in it.

Mrs. Thorne sat by the window, where Louis' voice fell upon her ear, but lost in her own thoughts, she could not have told what he was reading. An occasional laugh, or exclamation from him or Freda, made her look up for an instant, now and then, but she relapsed into her reverie again without speaking.

And so the shades of night closed around them.

CHAPTER IV.

"Some find work where some find rest,
And so the weary world goes on;
I sometimes wonder which is best;
The answer comes when life is gone."

—FATHER RYAN.

LOUIS' first waking impression the next morning was a vague sense that something was wrong. He had an uncomfortable feeling that something disagreeable had happened, or was going to happen, though he could not tell what it was.

Gradually, as he shook off his sleep, it came back to his mind, that he had heard bad news yesterday, that the straw shop had closed, and the income which his mother's never idle hands had earned from it was a thing of the past.

What was to be done now? He felt a new and not unpleasant sense of responsibility, such as the "man of the house" should feel.

If his mother could get no work, and therefore could not provide the little family with food, the duty naturally came to him next in order, for they must have something to eat, — there was no need of arguing about that while his morning

appetite spoke so plainly, — and there was no one else to get it. Besides, she had said, "What *we* earn must go for food," which showed that she expected him to do his share.

He was quite ready. If he had known the lines, he would have said, "The world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open."

Contrary to his custom, for the second time that week, he did not spring up as soon as he was fairly awake. He thought that the circumstances justified him in lying quietly a few minutes to revolve various plans in his mind. How could he think them over, while he was busy with all sorts of things, as he would be when he was once out of bed?

Of course, he could not go to school any more, he decided. On many accounts he was very sorry for that, but it couldn't be helped. Study must give place to work.

He might go to the city, and sell newspapers; there was always a chance to make money in the city; and a newsboy needed so little capital. He was tempted to call out "Tribune! 'Erald!" just to see if he could give the real newsboy shout, as he had heard it given; but he wisely postponed it till his mother and Freda should be awake. That reminded him of a difficulty. They might not like to have him leave them, even if he sent his earnings home every week, and sometimes came himself.

Then, would it be better to get a place in a

store, — there were several boys no older than he at "Mandell & Lawton's," — or should he see if Mr. Lawrence had any more work for him; or should he devote himself to the berries? Even that might do, while they lasted: he was a fast picker, he said to himself with a little pride.

He had read books in which boys, younger than he, were represented as succeeding wonderfully in supporting a whole family; and why might not he do as much as they? He was sure Miss Cecil would say that this was true knightly work.

By some connection of ideas, that reminded him of something she had once said about doing the nearest duty. That was without doubt to be found at the kitchen stove, for the fire must be made, whether there was anything to be cooked with it or not; and he sprang up and began dressing in great haste, trying to recover the lost time. But time once lost is like quicksilver dropped on the ground, not easily gathered again.

Before he was ready, Mrs. Thorne came to ask if he was sick, since he was so late, and told him that the fire was already burning. He was very much ashamed of the beginning he had made. Dreaming of the great things he would do, and planning for them, while his mother did the little things he ought to have done!

He went about his work very silently; but she prepared the usual simple breakfast, and took her share of it, told of seeing some children go by

after berries, talked of the eggs she hoped Louis would find, and wanted the usual work done, all just as though the sky had not fallen! Louis could not understand it.

The morning, on the whole, seemed so much like every other morning, and everything went on so exactly in its usual course, that he felt tempted to rub his eyes, and wake from his dream of an empty purse, and the wonderful things he would do to fill it.

He hinted as much to his mother, while she was preparing Freda's breakfast. It had to be daintier than their own, for the little invalid's appetite needed coaxing. Mrs. Thorne laughed a little at his idea of their condition.

"Did you think we were going to have no breakfast?" she said. "We are poor enough, certainly, just now, but at least we have enough for to-day, and we will try and take no thought for to-morrow."

She did not tell him that she had fought that battle out the night before. He was glad that she could laugh. The very sound cheered him.

"We are not going to the town farm just yet," she went on; "I have the money for my last straw work, and your earnings of Saturday, and we will hope that we shall find means to earn more before this is quite gone. Don't let us borrow trouble, Louis."

"No; we have quite enough of our own," he

said; but he said it in a different tone, and she was satisfied.

But she put a decided veto on all the wise plans which he had spent so much time over in the early morning, and which had seemed so feasible to him.

"There is no use in your thinking about such things," she said with a decision that he knew was immovable. "You will not give up your school as long as we can manage to keep you there. A boy's school days come only once, and if for any reason he is deprived of them, he regrets it only once,—but that once lasts for his lifetime. I don't mean to starve you mentally any more than bodily, if we can help it. You shall have as much of a chance for study as I can give you, and it depends on you to say whether you will improve it or not."

"Of course I will," Louis said; "only I think I ought to be at work."

"I am glad you want to help," she said, "and I think you will find a chance. Work as much as you like, before and after school; it will be a change, and won't hurt you, and we shall need all you can earn; but while you are in school, study with a will, and make the most of your chance there. I don't want my son to grow up an ignorant man."

There was an odd mingling of thoughts in Louis' mind. He could not have told whether he

was more glad or sorry. He liked to study, but it was rather a downfall for him, after his rose-colored visions of the morning concerning the great things he was going to do by way of proving himself the support of the family, to find that he was nothing but a schoolboy, after all. He was sure his mother did not realize how great his help would be, or how much she would need it, for he could not think of any work that she could find to do.

But he had sense enough to believe that she knew best what ought to be done, and he got his hat and books and went to school as usual, though he said he could not help leaving his mind at home. But he was fond of study, and soon became so much interested in a knotty problem that he had no thoughts to spare for anything else.

When he went home at noon, Mrs. Thorne had news for him. Mr. Lawrence had called to say that if Louis would like to work for him out of school hours, he could give him something to do for a few days.

"Of course I would like it!" Louis said, in high delight. "That makes a beginning, and it will bring in something. Did you tell him I would be glad to come? The hay is all in, and I can't think what I shall have to do. Did he say what it would be? Do you suppose Harry told him I wanted work?"

"I think it is very likely that he did," Mrs.

Thorne said, not attempting to answer anything but the last question. "But you never need be ashamed to ask for work. Why, Freda dear, what is the matter?"

For Freda was crying quietly.

"I shan't see Louis at all, now," she sobbed; "and the days are so long."

"I know they must seem so to you, my poor darling," her mother said, pityingly, "but you must try to be brave. Louis and I must work, you know, and I may not be able to get anything that I can do at home, as I did the straw, though I shall try, and it will be very hard for you, my dear little girl. But you want to take your share with us, don't you? You must remember that bearing the loneliness, if we have to leave you by yourself, and keeping cheerful through all the long days, so that you may show us a bright face when we come home, is the part of the burden you will have to bear. I think it is heavier than ours, and I am very sorry for you, but I am sure you will try to be our brave little helper."

"Yes, I will!" Freda said eagerly.

"And I'll tell you what we will do, Freda," Louis said. "You needn't think you are not going to see anything of me. I couldn't stand that. The noon hour shall be yours. I will bring my dinner in here, and eat it with you, until you get well enough to be carried out into the other room. I am sure I don't know why I never thought of it

before. See if we don't have a good time! And think how glad we shall be when I come home to-night!"

Freda had dried her eyes while her mother was speaking, resolved to begin being brave, and doing her share at once; but they sparkled now.

"Oh, Louis, you do think of the nicest things! Can't we begin to-day?" she said coaxingly. "I should like it so much."

Mrs. Thorne agreed with Louis that it was strange that they had never thought of it before, and it ended in her preparing Freda's dinner at once, and moving their little table into her room, so that the three dined together.

A merry meal they made of it, in spite of the shadows around them, and Freda made a brave effort to keep a cheerful face when Louis gave her his good-by kiss, and said she would not see him until night, since he was going to walk home across the fields with Harry after school, and so begin his work sooner. He meant to work two or three hours before he came home for his supper.

He half hoped that he should have Harry to work with him, the time would pass so much faster; but no such good fortune was in store for him.

They had their walk together, but Mr. Lawrence might have heard the old saying which has disgusted innumerable boys, "One boy does some work, but two boys do none," for when they

reached the farm, he despatched Harry to the barn, to harness Brown Bess, and sent Louis to a field at some distance from the house, where he was to dig potatoes.

The early potatoes on the Lawrence farm had a reputation of their own, and were always sure of a ready sale. Louis was rather disappointed when he found what his work was to be; but there was nothing to be said, and he took his hoe, and trudged off.

This was not like the stir and excitement of the hay-field, with wind blowing, and clouds coming up, and men and teams straining every nerve, and running a race against the rain. It was the first time he had been set to do steady, monotonous work, alone, with no one even to speak to, and he did not find it very pleasant. Still, the work was something that he could easily do.

"If Harry was here, it would be only fun," he reflected; "we could run races with the potatoes, and see who could get a hundred first."

As it was, there was no fun in it. He had worked long enough to get very tired of his job, with its silence and loneliness, — though, to do him justice, the idea of giving it up, and going home, never entered his mind, — when he happened to look toward the house.

He saw Harry drawing up Brown Bess with a flourish before the door. He was in the new buggy, on whose perfections he had been expati-

ating during the homeward walk, and both carriage and harness glittered in the sunshine.

Louis leaned on his hoe and watched him.

He stood patting Brown Bess's graceful head, and smoothing her glossy neck, until Mrs. Lawrence came out. He gallantly put her into the carriage, and tucked the duster carefully about her. Then, apparently at some suggestion from her, he altered a buckle of the harness, and looked critically over the rest, to be sure that all was right. Then he seated himself beside her, and drove off; Brown Bess curving her neck and tossing her mane, as if she enjoyed the swift trot into which she presently struck.

When the carriage was fairly out of sight, Louis drew a long breath which would have said a good deal to a listener if one had been there to hear it, and struck his hoe, with some unnecessary force, into the next hill.

Just then the good things of the world seemed to him to be very unevenly divided. Why should Harry have everything he wanted, while he himself had almost nothing? Why should Harry be driving that delightful Brown Bess, this lovely summer evening, while he had to spend it digging potatoes, which were not even his own when they were dug? Why should Mrs. Lawrence be sitting at her ease in that new buggy, which looked as if it would almost go of itself, while his mother had to stay at home, and he could not remember when

she last had a ride? Certainly, something was wrong, for it was very unfair.

But grumbling at the good fortune of others never helped any one yet, and he was no exception to the rule.

He began to look at the long row of hills that stretched out before him, all to be attacked one by one, and to consider how many there were. It seemed an endless task.

He did not know that he was repeating history; that the "Discontented Pendulum" had been all over that matter long before his day. He succeeded in making himself thoroughly unhappy, and he grew more tired and worked more slowly every minute.

But at last his common sense came to the rescue, with perhaps a little help from conscience. "What a fool I am!" he said to himself, in a disgusted tone. "Wasn't I glad enough to get this job? And the more there is of it, isn't it the better for me? Suppose Harry does go to ride? Why shouldn't he? He's a first-rate fellow, and I hope he will have a good time. I've got something else to do, and I should say I had better be doing it. I've heard my mother say that she can remember when Mr. Lawrence was a poor boy; and look at him now! I suppose other people can do what he did. One of these days I mean to have as much of everything as he has now, and I'll earn it myself, too. Dear me! I guess Miss Cecil wouldn't

want to say much about her knight, if she saw me grudging Harry his pleasure, and shirking my own work. I didn't think I was such a contemptible fellow!"

He addressed himself with new zeal to his task, trying to make up for his lost time. The shining steel flashed in the rays of the setting sun, as he struck the bright hoe into the hills. He began to enjoy seeing the great smooth potatoes roll out of the upturned earth, and the heaps grew fast while he whistled cheerily.

"Well done, Louis!" he was startled by hearing a voice behind him say.

Mr. Lawrence had come into the field unnoticed by him, and had been watching him for several minutes.

"That's the way I like to see a boy — or a man, for that matter — work! as if his heart was in it, not as if he was trying to see how little he could do."

Louis blushed. He had an uncomfortable consciousness that he would not have had the benefit of those words of praise, if the speaker had happened to come to him half an hour earlier.

"But I haven't worked so fast all the time," he said frankly. "I was taking a spurt just then."

Mr. Lawrence seemed much amused.

"You remind me of Pat O'Brien," he said. "You know what a lazy, good-natured fellow he is. Mr. Baker set him one day to digging out an

old stump, and left him at work. He went back, as he thought, before he had time to get it out, but there he found Pat, leaning against a tree, smoking his pipe, and complacently surveying his handiwork. The ground was all raked over, but there was a suspicious little hillock.

"'Ah, you've finished that job?' Mr. Baker said.

"'Long ago, surr,' said Pat.

"'But where's the stump?'

"Pat scratched his head. He hadn't thought of that.

"'The shtump, is it? The saints above know, for I don't!' he said at last, in despair.

"The stupid fellow had covered it up!

"Now you are better off," Mr. Lawrence said, "for you have the 'shtump' to show! These heaps testify that you have worked very well for a boy. But it is quite time for a boy to stop, who isn't used to steady work, and has eaten nothing since noon. I came out to tell you to go to the house, and get your supper, before you go home. Margaret has it ready for you."

How glad Louis was that he had not been found idling! He worked a little longer to make up to his own satisfaction for the time he had wasted while "the black dog sat on his shoulder."

Then how he did enjoy his supper! Margaret supplied him with a basin of water, and a towel, and then seated him at a corner of the kitchen table, before a mighty platter containing the abun-

dant remains of a great "boiled dish," which she had cooked for dinner, with a large piece of berry pie to follow it.

The supper was a bit of Mrs. Lawrence's kindly consideration.

"Winifred Thorne would never accept charity for herself or her children," she said to her husband. "If it was a possible thing, I should like to give her boy some new clothes, both for old friendship's sake, and to please Harry, but I know her too well to venture it. At any rate, you can give him some work; and though you say it won't do to pay him more than you do other boys, we can at least see that he has one good solid meal in the day. I should like to feel sure that he had three."

But Louis knew nothing of this, and he rejoiced in the supper, and did great execution upon the cold corned beef and vegetables, while Margaret, whose kind Irish heart warmed to him, urged him to new exertions.

"I call that a supper that *is* a supper, Margaret," he said, as he pushed his chair back at last.

"Sure, I'm thinkin' it's the hunger that made the sauce for it," she returned, "and much good may it do ye. From noon till night is too long intirely for a bye like ye to go without the bit and sup."

When Louis left the house, he found Mr. Lawrence sitting on the porch.

"You would like to take your pay each night, wouldn't you?" he said, taking out his purse. "I pay my men fifteen cents an hour, and my boys half of that, with a half-cent thrown in to make even change. How long did you work to-night? Two hours and a half? Can you cipher it up?"

Louis was equal to that demand, and Mr. Lawrence put the money in his hand.

"Don't spend it for peanuts before you get home!" he said. "And you can take this basket of potatoes to your mother, for a sample of what you have been digging. Tell her I'm not a bit ashamed of them. Shall I see you to-morrow, or have you had enough of it?"

"Oh no, sir! I mean, yes, sir!" Louis said, getting entangled in the two questions. "I shall come, certainly. And I think I can work a while in the morning before school, the mornings are so long."

"Come when you like," Mr. Lawrence said. "You will find the field in the same place. And see that you never go away at night without your supper. If Margaret does not give you a good one, you can speak to me about it," he added, raising his voice mischievously for Margaret's benefit.

A laugh from the kitchen answered him, and Louis said, "I guess there's no danger of that."

He hurried home with his basket, to find that

his mother had met with no success in her search for work; and the pleasure he felt in giving her the twenty cents he had earned, made him forget his weariness for the time. He seemed to be really the bread-winner of the household.

"That will feed us for to-morrow," he said cheerfully, as she dropped the coins into the box which served for the family treasury. "We can have baked potatoes for breakfast, and I shall try to bring you a little more than that to-morrow night."

He talked for a little while to amuse Freda, who had passed a lonely afternoon; but his unusual work had tired him, and he was glad to take his mother's advice and go to bed early. "The sleep of the laboring man is sweet," and Louis' sleep was sound and dreamless.

He rose, rested and refreshed, so early that he was able to work for more than two hours before school time came; and when he went home at night, tired indeed, but with forty cents instead of twenty, he began to feel as if he had struck a gold mine, and to think the new jacket would not be unattainable for so long a time as his mother had feared.

How he wished he had it to-night! Not that he dreaded wearing the old one so much as he had dreaded wearing it to church. The first step was the one that cost. It had been even easier going to school than he had feared. His

more intimate friends, with true gentlemanly feeling, had, for anything that appeared, taken no notice of it. Sneers from some of the ruder boys, it is true, had to be borne; but Harry Lawrence and Willie Russell were seen talking to them soon after, and whatever arguments they used had proved effective, for he had no more trouble from that source. He was getting used to the shabby jacket, too, so that he did not so often think of it; and if he wanted the new one to-night, it was more that he might do honor to Miss Huntington's invitation, than from any feeling of shame.

But there was no use in wishing for that, and he contented himself with brushing the old one diligently, until there was not a speck of dust upon it. His mother had found time to make him a pretty tie from some bits of ribbon; and when she had brushed his bonny brown hair herself, she gave him a kiss and said: —

"My grandmother used to say to us, 'Handsome is as handsome does, girls. Behave as well as you look, and you'll do.' So I pass her words of wisdom down to you."

Like most mothers, she had her own opinion of her boy, both as to looks and behavior.

There was still a little time to spare; for, as Freda said, "the party didn't begin till seven o'clock." Louis said he was tired, and was glad to sit down with her to rest, until it should be time to go.

CHAPTER V.

"You cannot think that the buckling on of the knight's armor by his lady's hand was a mere caprice of romantic fashion. It is the type of an eternal truth, that the soul's armor is never well set to the heart unless a woman's hand has braced it, and it is only when she braces it loosely that the honor of manhood fails." — RUSKIN.

HARRY called for Louis, according to agreement, and before they reached Miss Huntington's house, they met the rest of the class, so that they all went in together, much to the relief of shy Charlie Ray, who had recently joined the class, and had dreaded making his entrance alone. It was not a first visit to any of the others.

Ulla ushered them into the pretty parlor, where Miss Huntington was waiting to receive them, and her cordial greeting put them at ease at once.

Louis thought this parlor was the prettiest room he had ever seen; perhaps that was partly due to the fact that it had the homelike look, the indescribable something, which only rooms that are in daily use can have.

A low sewing-chair was placed by Miss Cecil's favorite window, with a small work-table before it, on which stood a dainty little silk-lined basket, holding the various gay-colored silks which were

needed for the strip of embroidery lying beside it. Books and pictures were on other tables, and flowers were everywhere. The air was sweet with their fragrance.

Two large windows on one side reached to the floor, and opened in the middle like doors, sliding back, so that the wide piazza became, to all intents and purposes, a part of the room.

Two pretty kittens were lying on a soft rug, near the sewing-chair, and Louis soon espied them.

"Isn't one of those *our* kitten, Miss Cecil?" he asked, as soon as the first greetings were over. "They are so much alike, I can't tell which one it is. They might be twins."

"The one with the white vest and white gloves is ours," Miss Cecil said. "My Mab looked a little askance at her, when they were first introduced. I fancy she was inclined to be contemptuous of such a forlorn-looking object, and thought her beneath her notice; but since she finds that Lu has developed into something even prettier than herself, and gets her full share of petting, she has grown quite cordial to the stranger. They are excellent friends now."

"What did you call her?" Harry asked.

"She was named for a special friend of hers," Miss Cecil said, with a glance at Louis. "Her full name, for high days and holidays, is Louise Thorne; but it is too long for everyday use, so I call her Lu, commonly. I think she knows her name very

well already; especially if, when she hears it, she sees a saucer of milk! Call her, Louis, and see if she remembers you."

Alas for the kitten's memory of benefits received! His calling had no effect; but as soon as she heard Miss Cecil's better known voice, she sprang up. Mab jumped at the same instant, and they tumbled over each other in their eagerness to be first, until the two heads and tails seemed multiplied into six.

If there had been any stiffness in the little party, the laugh that followed would have dissipated it. Mab and Lu seemed to enter into the spirit of the fun, and chased each other, or a ball, or their own tails, with equal zest, and much to the satisfaction of the boys.

"What a shame to kill anything so thoroughly alive to the tips of its toes, as that cute little kitten!" Tom Perkins said. "Bill Simmons ought to have been spiflicated for trying it on."

"To have been — what?" Miss Cecil said. "Please put that into English for me, Tom."

"I'm afraid I can't," Tom said, laughing frankly. "I don't think I know myself exactly what it means. I saw it in a book once, and I thought it sounded like a pretty good word, so I saved it up to use! Don't you think it is pretty expressive of — something? I'm sure I don't know what, but it's a good strong word!"

"Why, Tom," Miss Cecil said when she could

speak, "you are as bad as that old woman who was found crying after hearing a sermon. She couldn't tell why she cried, only she said that sweet word 'Mesopotamia' was too much for her."

"After that, I'll invest in a pocket dictionary," Tom said. "But I'm quite sure that my word isn't geographical, whatever else it may be, and I guess you all know the meaning I meant it should have."

"I suppose you mean the meaning you meant it should mean!" Willie Russell suggested.

"Come, you shall not be teased any longer, Tom," Miss Cecil said. "Would you like to look at some of my pictures, boys? I have quite a collection of them."

They came around the table, and she brought out a large box, which contained several smaller boxes of photographs.

"I am not going to inflict all these on you," she said. "When I am travelling, I like to get a few good photographs of the places I visit, because they recall the scenes to my mind so plainly afterwards. So this box holds Canadian pictures; this one, views in the Caves of Luray; these I brought from the Thousand Islands; those came from Concord; and so on. The boxes are labelled, you see, so you can choose the place you would like to visit."

The table was quickly strewn with the pictures, and they passed from hand to hand, some in

silence, some with explanations from Miss Cecil, and comments from the others.

"What are these?" Harry asked after a while, taking up another box.

"Two of my cousins went on a vacation trip through West Virginia and a part of Maryland, last summer," she said, opening the box. "They are amateur photographers, and these form the pictured history of their adventures. They went chiefly for their health, and wanted to live out doors. They hired two horses and a big wagon of a kind which we don't see in this part of the country, and packed all sorts of articles for use and comfort into it, and on it, behind it, and under it. There's a picture of it, as it looked when they were ready to start."

"Only think of their feelings if that had upset!" said Willie. "Just look at the things fastened on, wherever there was a chance!"

"Yes," Miss Cecil said. "They prided themselves on utilizing every inch of space, and found too late, as a good many others have found, that too many luxuries, or conveniences even, become a nuisance. It was very well to pack their wagon scientifically at their leisure at home, but it was quite another thing to replace all its contents every morning, since it was like a dissected puzzle, everything having to go in its own place, and refusing to fit anywhere else. They began to declare one thing and another unnecessary, and

throw it away, until there was plenty of room in the wagon, and they were reduced to what they called 'light marching order.'"

"That means a gun and a frying-pan, out West," said Horace.

"Oh, they did not get quite so far as that," she said. "They meant to do their own cooking, so they took an oil stove, and carried supplies of bacon, canned goods, and so on. They bought milk and eggs and bread at the farmers' houses. Each of them carried his camera, and they took photographs of the scenes that interested them most."

"Oh, what fun it must have been!" Willie said.

"Some of it was," Cecil said, smiling, as she remembered their description of some days which certainly did not come under that head.

"Can't you tell us some more about it?" Harry urged. "I do like anything about camping out, so much."

"It seems to me that the description would be more pleasant than the thing itself," she said. "I think they were glad to camp *in* occasionally, for a change. Now and then, when they passed through a village, they treated resolution by what they called 'a square meal and a civilized sleep,' at a hotel, and then went back to their gypsy life again. One slept in the wagon, and the other in a hammock. There's a night scene — taken in the morning!"

"Which was best?" Charlie asked.

"Well," she said, "I don't think there was much to choose. They said it was like the two bad roads to town. 'Whichever you took, you would wish you had taken the other.' I believe they rather preferred the shelter of the wagon, but they took turns with it. They agreed that finding food and water for the horses, when they stopped at night, and were, perhaps, far from any house or stream, was the hardest thing they did. That is a picture of one of their camps."

"They look very comfortable," Horace said, passing the picture on.

"Especially the one who is leaning back against the trunk of that big tree, with the cup in his hand," said George.

"Coffee was their great comfort," Miss Cecil remarked. "And they were quite proud of their skill in making it. John thought he was qualified to teach a cooking-school when he came home.

"This is the same camp a little later. One is washing dishes, and the other is bringing hay from the farm-house below, to feed the horses. You can see him coming up the rocks, with a big bundle of hay on his back."

"That doesn't look quite so comfortable," Horace said.

"What I want to know is, who took the picture?" said Louis. "Both of them are in it."

"Of course," Tom said, with the complacency

of superior knowledge. "There's a cord fastened to the cap of the camera, and one of them manages it with a touch. It ought to be there somewhere. There, don't you see it lying on the log by the dish-washer?"

"Oh, I see it!" two or three exclaimed.

"And here is a pencilled sketch," Miss Cecil said, "which tells quite a story, and comments upon your 'fun,' Willie. It was put into the set, because a photograph could not well be taken under the circumstances. It shows them plodding along in the rain. See how the storm drives, and how deep their feet seem to sink in the mud! The horses were tired, and could barely drag themselves along, so the two young gentlemen were toiling up that hill on foot, as they toiled up a good many others, through the deep, adhesive Virginia mud. They said they never knew before what mud was. Did you ever see more doleful faces, or more thoroughly depressed horses?"

"Well, camping out in the wet, at the end of a day like that, with everything dripping, and the rain pouring, wouldn't be so much fun," Willie generously admitted.

"I shouldn't wonder if they were ready to sing, 'Be it ever so homely, there's no place like home,' by the time their horses and themselves were fed that night," Horace said.

"Oh, it would be like our going fishing. Who minds a little rain then?" said Louis. "And

only think how they would enjoy the next day's sunshine! Everything would be so clean after the rain."

"Except the mud," said Miss Cecil. "But that is a good way to look at disagreeable things, Louis. I think they laughed over the discomforts. Certainly they can laugh at them now. I believe it is disagreeable things that give the charm to memories of adventure.

"Here are pictures of some of the battle-fields that they saw."

But the boys did not take the same interest in these. They looked very much like any other fields, they said; and they were not sufficiently well read in history to be able to recall the facts connected with them, or to picture the scene in their imagination, when the smoke of battle hung over it, and the dead and dying lay stretched upon it, trampled on by the feet of the victors and of the vanquished, in the heat of flight and pursuit.

"I like the other pictures better, with people in them," Tom said frankly. "There's nothing special to look at in these. Seeing the battle itself would be another thing, but this is only the bird's nest after the bird has flown. These are nothing but hill and meadow, and one can see those anywhere."

"That's why I liked those Caves of Luray," said George, "because I never saw anything like them, and they reminded me of the 'Arabian Nights.'"

All the others assented; and while each was telling which one of the pictures they had seen had found most favor in his eyes, Miss Cecil said to Louis: —

"Will you bring that engraving-stand here, please? I think you may find something there that you will all like."

She was quite right. The boys deserted the photographs, and clustered about her, for all could see together, as the large engravings were slowly turned. Each of these pictures told a story of its own, sometimes so plainly as to need no explanation, sometimes requiring a few words of description.

There was a life-boat making its way through the foaming waves, which half buried it, to a wrecked ship; there was a hunting-scene, with the hunters gathering at the meet, under the great English oaks, with eager horses, and hounds straining at the leash; there was Mazeppa, bound upon his desert-born steed; and King Alfred meekly receiving the scolding of his peasant hostess for letting her cakes burn; there were beautiful Madonnas, and angels with lovely child-faces; there was a hawking scene, with a fair lady on a white horse, throwing a falcon into the air from her gauntleted wrist; and there was Burns' white-headed cotter, in the midst of his family, with his big Bible, "waling a portion with judicious care."

It was an odd medley, but there was life and action in it all; there seemed no end to the variety and the beauty, and the boys were delighted. At last a picture appeared which brought an exclamation from several at once of —

"Oh, what is that?"

"I know!" Willie Russell exclaimed; "for I have just been reading 'Ivanhoe.' You ought to read it, boys. It is perfectly splendid! Isn't that the tournament of Ashby, Miss Cecil, with the Sluggish Knight coming up to Ivanhoe's aid, when there was such unfair odds against him? He is just reining back his horse as those fellows strike at him on each side at once."

"You are quite right, Willie," Miss Cecil said. "I am glad you can recognize it. Tell the others about it."

He went on eagerly to enlighten them, describing the two days' contest, and the result of the fight, in the most animated terms. The boys listened intently, and when he could tell no more, they looked at the picture again, with a new understanding and appreciation of it.

"I wish there were such knights now," Harry said presently, while they were still studying the details of the picture. "It is a pity that the race has died out. It would be something to see such a tournament, and to know that there were men who could do such brave deeds."

Louis exchanged a smile and a look of intelli-

gence with Miss Huntington. It amused him to hear his own words from Harry's lips.

"Oh, yes, it is very fine to read about them," Willie Russell said wisely. "Nobody likes that better than I do. But unless you were a knight yourself, if you were only one of their underlings, I don't believe you would care to have them about. You would be glad to get back to our good old doctrine that 'all men are born free and equal,' and have a chance to make what they choose of themselves. The strongest ruled in those days, and the weakest went to the wall, no matter which side the right was on."

"It was very much so," said Miss Cecil, to whom Harry looked. "Rob Roy's rule was not far from the standard of men in general. Did you ever hear it?

"'The good old rule
Sufficeth me; the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

"'Since then,' said Robin, 'right is plain,
And longest life is but a day,
To have my ends, maintain my rights,
I'll take the shortest way.'

"And thus among those rocks he lived,
Through summer's heat and winter's snow;
The eagle, he was lord above,
And Rob was lord below."

"There! He didn't mince matters much, did he?" said Willie.

"If he went on his 'simple plan' in these times, he would find the police after him," Horace said. "But, say what you like against them, after all, I do admire those knights, and I don't see that they were any worse than the rest of the world. Most people get all they can, of power or wealth, in one way or another. Look at the most famous men of the world, Cæsar, Napoleon, and that German — I can't remember his name. I don't think they stopped to consider other people's rights very much, and nobody blamed them for it. Everybody praised their courage and ability."

"Except the other people!" Charlie Ray put in.

"When men are conquering the world, they have a big contract on their hands, and can't stop for trifles," Horace rejoined, in a slighting manner.

"But it wasn't a trifle to the other people," Charlie persisted. "It was their rights that were taken away."

"Oh, well," Horace said, "'they must keep who can.' It always comes to that, I guess."

"What I like in the knights was their bravery," said Willie Russell. "I suppose they were an ignorant set of people, who couldn't read or write, and nobody can say much for their morals. I dare say they did go on Rob Roy's plan, just as far as they could. But, at least, they were brave. No-

body can deny that. They would never show the white feather, even in the greatest danger. Just look at Ivanhoe there, with those two huge fellows attacking him!"

"He was pretty well protected," Harry said. "Look at all that armor; it covers everything but his eyes. Made of iron, wasn't it?"

"No; steel," Willie said. He felt himself an authority on the subject, in view of his recent reading of Scott, and proceeded to expound the matter. "They had steel shirts made of little rings welded together, so that they would yield to every motion of the wearer, and yet would turn a sword, or the point of a lance; and the rest of the armor was made of steel plates. Friar Tuck called King Richard's helmet 'an iron pot,' but I suppose it was made of steel. A nice weight all that armor must have been! I don't see how they could carry it, and have any strength left for fighting; but they did."

"But it seems to me that it was no great proof of bravery to cover themselves with steel from head to foot, and then declare themselves ready to fight," said Harry. "It is like a turtle in his shell. Suppose I got behind a six-foot wall, and then challenged you to come on?"

"I being behind another wall, I suppose!" said Willie; and there was a general laugh. "Still, with all their precautions, there was some chance left of their getting hurt, for they were often

wounded or killed, so I still think they were very brave."

"I wonder," George Baker said, "if it wouldn't take as much courage to face a shower of shells and cannon-balls, as soldiers have to do now, as to face one man with a lance?"

"More, I think," Harry answered.

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," Willie said. "They say it takes a man's weight in bullets to kill him. Not one in a hundred hits anybody, so your chance of escaping is pretty good; but when you see a man with a sharp lance coming right at you, and at nobody else, and know that he is meaning to send it through you if he can, it is quite another thing.

"And there's a difference in the courage it takes to use a gun, or a lance, as well as to face one. I remember reading, only a little while ago, that Chevalier Bayard despised the arquebusiers, who were the gunners of his day. He said it needed both skill and courage to wield the lance and sword, but any skulking wretch could pull a trigger from behind a stone. I suppose the other knights felt as he did about it."

"Well, if he had owned a six-shooter, and been as skilful with it as he was with his lance, he might have sung another song," Tom remarked shrewdly.

"Besides," said Harry, "the knights could choose their own time and way of fighting, but our soldiers must go where they are sent, and do

as they are told, and they haven't the same hope of fame and glory to encourage them to brave deeds, for that seems to go chiefly to the officers. All anybody says about the men, no matter what they do, is only that they have done their duty."

"But that isn't a small thing to say of any one," said Miss Cecil, "whether he is knight, or soldier, or schoolboy. It is high praise. It is what those same knights aimed at, and some of them earned their fame fairly. There was the Chevalier Bayard, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, — the one of whom Willie spoke. You could not have a better illustration. He was a marvel of bravery, even among brave men. From the time when he became a page of the Duke of Savoy, in his fourteenth year, until he died on the field of battle, his life was one long succession of victories, though he often fought against fearful odds. His history reads like a fairy tale."

"I like fairy tales very much, — especially when they are true!" Louis hinted.

Miss Cecil smiled at him, and continued: —

"In a tournament like that at Ashby, before he was nineteen years old, forty-eight of his companions struck his shield — you know what that signified, Willie?"

"It was to show that they wanted to fight with him; a challenge to him," Willie answered. "But forty-eight of them!"

"Yes, so historians say. They rode into the lists against him, and he overthrew the whole band, one by one, and was proclaimed the champion of the field."

"Splendid fellow!" Willie cried, with sparkling eyes.

"His feats of arms in real battle were quite equal to that, and both would seem fabulous, if they were not so well attested. Would you like to hear one of those?" Miss Cecil asked, observing the interest of her auditors.

"You must not think all the knights were like him. He was the flower of the chivalry of his time. I remember that I was very much impressed by one example of his deeds, which will show you the man, as well as a dozen could.

"The German Emperor was going to attack the city of Mezieres. It was a very important place; for if it was taken, the whole province would be lost, and yet it was in no condition to be defended. It had no artillery, and the ramparts were in ruins. No one dared assume the responsibility of defending it. But Bayard volunteered to do it. He said, 'No walls are weak which are defended by brave men.' He went to the city with a small force of picked men, and took command. There was brief time for preparation, for two days later the Count of Nassau besieged it, with a great army of men and many cannon. The besieging army expected the place to surrender

before twelve hours were over, defending it seemed so hopeless. They thought the very sight of their numbers would be enough; but they did not count on Bayard. He was a host in himself.

"Every day breaches were made in the ramparts by the enemy's cannon-shot, but every night they were rebuilt as if by magic. The defenders of the city, faint and few, had to contend with wounds, pestilence, and famine, within their walls, as well as with the hosts without; but Bayard had put every man on oath to eat his horse and his boots before he would surrender, and they kept their word. For three weeks, until relief came, he held the city against that great army of forty thousand men, with a hundred cannon to help them.

"Some time after, it is said, Mary of Hungary scornfully asked the Count of Nassau how it happened that, with all those troops and guns, he had failed to capture that crazy pigeon-house of Mezieres.

"And he answered, 'Because there was an eagle in it!'"

The boys had listened with breathless interest, and at this answer they fairly clapped their hands, while Tom Perkins uttered a half-suppressed cheer.

Miss Huntington had been very glad to find them disposed to talk so freely, because it showed how completely they felt at their ease with her, and because it gave her an insight into their char-

acters which it would be impossible for her to get while they were talking under any restraint, even if it were as light as the check imposed by their relative positions in the Sabbath-school, as teacher and pupils. Here they seemed to forget that.

A little boy once said to his mother, "Do you know that there's two of me? There's the me that people see, that's one; and there's another me, inside of me, that they don't know anything about."

It was this second "me," the real self, of which Miss Cecil was watching to get a glimpse, through all this talk and that which followed. They said nothing very wise; they only chatted easily, wandering from one thing to another, and saying just what came uppermost; but she knew that half a dozen boys cannot long talk together, on any subject in which they are interested, without unconsciously disclosing to a listener a little of their real character.

"I think all that just proved what I said, that those knights were wonderfully brave men," Willie Russell said eagerly. "Wasn't Bayard perfectly splendid?"

Miss Cecil gave a hearty assent.

"But," she added, "I think we might find deeds as knightly as his, without going back through the years to his time. Can none of you think of any of more recent date?"

There was a little pause while the boys considered.

"I should think he did for his men exactly what General Sheridan did for his, when he rode from Winchester to save the day," said Tom. "That was the last piece I spoke.

"He dashed down the line, 'mid a storm of huzzas,
And the wave of retreat checked its course then, because
The sight of the master compelled it to pause."

"I have often heard my father tell," Charlie Ray said, "of a brave thing that was done at the great fire in Chicago, years ago, which Mrs. O'Leary's cow began — "

"How did she do it?" interrupted one. "Explain that point before you go any further!"

"Was she playing with matches?" demanded another.

"Was it a spark from her cigar?" questioned a third.

"A cow is about the last creature I should suspect of such a crime," Harry remarked. "They are such meditative, dreamy animals. Shows that it isn't safe to judge from appearances. Perhaps this one had been drinking something besides water?"

Charlie turned from one to another of the teasing boys, as if he intended to hear all they had to say before answering any one. Then he explained briefly: —

"Kicked over a lamp!" and went on with his story, this time without interruption.

"In the Great Fire, my uncle John's house was burned. It was one of the first to go; that is, before the alarm became general over the city. It was all on fire, almost before they knew it, and nothing could be saved; but my uncle said he didn't care, he was so glad that his wife and children were all safely out of it. So they stood watching it burn, and the next house had just caught fire from it, in spite of the firemen, when little Fanny's nurse came rushing up to them, and screamed out that Fanny was in the burning house, in her room. Uncle was nearly crazy, and was going to rush in after her, but they wouldn't let him go."

"*Who* wouldn't?" George interposed.

"The firemen," said Charlie. "The engineer picked out two men, and sent them instead of him, because they knew what to do. They found Fanny crying on the nurse's bed, and she cried all the more when one of the strange men took her in his arms, and tore a blanket off the bed, and wrapped her up in it, head and all. He put another round himself, and tried with the other man's help to rush through the fire, but it had got under such headway that it beat them back. They tried twice, and then Fanny's man said: —

"'We *must* get through! There's no way but this. I told the mother I would bring this child to her. If I fall, snatch her, and don't wait for me, and may God help us!'

"They rushed into the fire again; the last part of

the way they threw themselves on their faces, and crawled along; but this time they did get through to the front of the house, and came down a ladder. Fanny wasn't touched by the fire, she was covered up so carefully; but the two men were terribly burned, and they had to stay in the hospital a long time. It seems to me that it was as brave a thing as the deeds of the knights. Of the two, I should rather fight a man than to fight fire, at such close quarters. But very few knew anything about it, and so many such things happened in the next few days, that the firemen didn't even get much praise. People were too busy with their own trouble, and took heroism as a matter of course."

"But how came the baby to be left there?" Harry asked. "I should think that people would have the sense to call the roll at such a time, and so make themselves certain that everybody is out of the house."

"Uncle John thought he was certain," Charlie said, with some indignation. "It was the fault of the nurse. He put Fanny in her arms, and saw her start with her, while the way to the door was clear, and then he went to get Bertie. But the fire wasn't actually in the room, and the nurse thought she should have time enough to save some things of her own, so she put Fanny down for a minute while she got them. Then a fireman shouted to her that she had no time to lose, and the smoke filled the room, and she grew confused, and forgot Fanny, till it was too late."

"Stupid woman," said Harry, "thinking so much of her old duds! But that fireman did do a brave thing, Charlie. It was something to be proud of."

"There ought to be a decoration of honor for such things, given by the nation," said Willie; "something like the medal of the Humane Society, or like the Victoria Cross in England, or like being knighted on the field of battle."

"But firemen are always doing just that kind of thing," Horace objected, "so that your medals, or whatever you had, would soon be as common as buttons."

"Then, doesn't that go to prove that the knightly spirit survives in our day?" said Miss Cecil. "Only it isn't confined to one class of men, a chosen few. It is found all over our land, and so we take it as a matter of course, and do not prize it as we should. But, after all, isn't it just as noble to risk your own life in order to save another's, as to do it in order to destroy it? Don't you like the firemen's helmet as much as King Richard's 'iron pot'?"

"That is the kind of thing engineers do on the railroad," said Tom. "In the account of almost every accident the papers say that the engineer might have saved his life if he had jumped from his engine; but he never does it. To the last minute he keeps his hand on the throttle-valve, does his best to save the lives of his passengers, and

dies himself. For anything I can see, we shall all have to be engineers or firemen, if we want to do brave things."

"Not necessarily," Miss Cecil said. "That is hardly fair to the rest of the world. If you have the spirit, the chance to show it won't be lacking, whatever road in life you may happen to follow. It is just being ready to meet danger, or to sacrifice yourself, for others, and you can't find any position where you won't have a chance to do that. In England, there is no day in the year when the blossom is off the gorse, and so the English have a saying, 'When the gorse is out of bloom, then is kissing out of fashion.' I think the saying holds good of heroism as well. I have two friends who, to my mind, are heroes; but they are not knights, nor engineers, nor firemen. One is a doctor, and the other a farmer."

"Oh, don't stop there!" Louis said. "I hope you are going to tell us about them."

"It isn't very much to tell, though I think it was a grand thing to do," she returned. "A town in one of our Southern States was smitten by yellow fever. That is a terrible disease, you know, and very contagious. Of course, the first impulse of all to whom flight was possible was to flee; but they were forbidden to leave the town, lest they should spread the infection; and no one dared to go to them, for it seemed like going to certain death. The two physicians of the place were

among the first victims of the fever, so the sick were left to their fate. The absence of medical care seemed to take away their last slender hope of life, and the telegraph brought to the North most urgent appeals for help.

"My friend heard them. It was like the trumpet-call to Bayard; and he answered as promptly, though life was opening bright before him, with fair prospects of usefulness and happiness; and though his friends called him Quixotic, and his intention suicidal, and said everything they could to dissuade him from throwing himself away for strangers who had no claim upon him. But he said they had the claim of need, and he was young and strong, with no family depending upon him for support, and so, plainly, just the one to go; and he went.

"The poor sufferers received him as if he was sent from heaven, and he worked among them day and night, going from the house of the rich planter to the hut of the poor negro, doing the humblest offices when need required, nursing the sick and burying the dead with his own hands, forgetful of self, until, in his turn, he was stricken down by the terrible disease. I call him as brave a knight as Bayard!"

"So do I!" "And I!" half a dozen voices agreed.

"Did he die?" Charlie Ray asked. "I hope not."

"No," Miss Cecil said. A little flush had risen to her cheeks, and her eyes were shining. "No. He was very ill, but he recovered and came back to the North, and took up his work again, in the old way, as if he had done nothing remarkable. It made a nine days' talk, and then was forgotten. I think he has almost forgotten it himself. But he did not do it for the sake of fame. I don't think even the boys of his Sunday-school know that they have a hero for a superintendent!"

She said it significantly. The boys looked at her an instant, as if they could not believe their ears; then with one impulse they sprang to their feet.

"Miss Cecil!" Harry exclaimed. "You don't —you *can't* mean that it was Dr. Gardiner who did that magnificent thing!"

She nodded. She enjoyed their surprise and wonder, though a deeper feeling brought the blush to her cheek and made her eyes sparkle.

"Oh, the splendid fellow!" Harry said enthusiastically. "And to think that we never knew it!"

"I always did know that Dr. Gardiner came about as near perfection as they make them," Tom declared. "I can say so much for myself."

"But only think of our having a real hero right before our face and eyes, every Sunday, and we never finding it out, or even suspecting it!" said Horace.

"It was twice as brave a thing to do," Louis

said, "as to risk his life in battle, for the sake of killing somebody else, when all about him there would be trumpets sounding, and feathers flying, and horses prancing, and everything to key him up to concert pitch! He ought to be called Sir Maxwell!"

"I wonder—" Miss Cecil began. Then she stopped, and seemed to consider.

"In the battle of Gettysburg," she began again, "one of the chaplains was so badly hurt by a fall from his horse, that he had to lie on the field all night. He was surrounded by dead and dying men. He could hear nothing but the groans which pain forced from the wounded. He was himself suffering severely from his injury. I think the hours must have seemed very long to him. But while he lay there on the ground, he heard a voice at a little distance say 'Oh, my God!' and he thought, 'I must get to that man somehow.' There was no one to carry him; he couldn't walk; he couldn't creep; but he could roll, and he rolled over and over, among the dead bodies, and through the blood of the wounded, until he reached the man, and could tell him of the love of the God on whose name he had called. Then a dying officer wanted him, and two men carried him to his side. So he passed the rest of that long night, the two soldiers carrying him from one to another, and he, regardless of his own sufferings, talked to them of our blessed Saviour,

and prayed with them, while he had to lie on his back beside them."

"Well," Harry said, "I always thought that Englishman, Sir Philip Sidney, did a fine thing when he was dying, and was so dreadfully thirsty, and one of his friends brought him a cup of water, to give it to a poor wounded soldier who looked longingly at it, because he said the man needed it more than he did; but I think this was a finer thing. That chaplain must have been a real Christian, and believed what he preached. I should like to hear him preach. I should know his heart was in it."

"It was a grand thing to do," Louis said earnestly. "I do like to hear of such noble men as that. They are better than the knights, because they come nearer to us, and they do things that we may have a chance to do some day."

"You think you could roll over and over, if you couldn't defeat forty-eight men in a tournament!" said mischievous Tom. "I shall expect to see you practising!"

But the others were too much in earnest to laugh.

"It is among possibilities that you may hear that chaplain preach, some day," Miss Cecil said, with a side glance at Willie. "He is the minister now of a country church, and I have heard him preach. But I don't believe that the boys who listen to him every Sunday have the slightest

idea that they have a Christian hero for a pastor. I doubt whether even his own son knows it; for true chivalry in these days doesn't go about blazoning its own deeds in search of fame, but keeps modestly silent about them, and leaves others to discover them."

"Miss Cecil!" Harry exclaimed again, "do you mean us? I saw a queer look on your face then. Were we those boys? Was that chaplain our minister, Mr. Russell?"

"My father!" Willie gasped, almost breathless with surprise. "And I never knew it!"

"It certainly was your father," Miss Cecil replied. "He is one of my heroes, a knight whose lance is always ready, whose armor is always on, and who always answers the trumpet's call, even if he is wounded and suffering, thinking only of his duty, and forgetting himself."

"It's exactly like Mr. Russell," said Horace. "Shake hands, Willie! You've a right to be proud of your father. I'm proud of my minister, I can tell you. I should like to shake hands with him, and I will, the first chance I get; but in the meantime I will make you do for a substitute."

The tears were in Willie's eyes, though they were anything but tears of grief, for he felt in a tumult of joy and pride; but as the boys, following Horace Davenport's lead, all pressed round him, shaking both hands at once, and throwing their enthusiasm into the strength of their squeeze, the

tears disappeared, while he laughingly begged for mercy.

But when quiet was once more restored, Miss Cecil smiled to see him cast a glance at Ivanhoe's picture, which said, plainly enough, that another now held the place of that knight in his imagination.

"Now you will tell us about your other friend, Miss Cecil, won't you? You said there were two. The farmer, you know," said Harry Lawrence. "I shall be on the watch this time. I hope he will turn out to be my father!"

"Please tell us in the beginning, if it is Mr. Lawrence, or if it is anybody we know," said Horace. "I don't think I could stand another shock to-night!"

"Then it is fortunate that I have not another in store for you," Miss Cecil replied. "My other friend is some one whom you have never seen. And I am afraid you will be disappointed in his history, for there was nothing brilliant in what he did."

"That comforts me for its not being my father!" Harry remarked.

"For my part," said George, "I'm beginning to feel that I shan't be able to look at a man in the street, without saying to myself, 'Now, I wonder what *you* have done!'"

"My friend was the only son of a farmer," Miss Cecil said: "but he had a great dislike to country life, while his father had an equal dislike to a

city life. When he reached manhood, he had an opportunity to go into business in the neighboring city, where he was certain that he could soon make a fortune. But his father had grown to depend upon him; and between his need of him and his fears for his future, — for he really believed that the city would be his ruin in every way, — was very unhappy at the idea of his going. No effort could change his view of it.

"My friend considered the question on all sides, and decided that it was his duty to stay at the old home. His father did not understand what a struggle it cost him to give up his hopes and prospects, and the life that he preferred, and only said that 'Joe was a pretty sensible fellow, after all; and he knew he would see on which side his bread was buttered.'

"He lost his health soon afterward, and all the care of the large farm fell upon my friend. It was work that he disliked, but he forced himself to do it with a will. No one's farm was kept in better order; no one's crops were larger.

"The father, feeble as he was, lived twenty years longer. He was nearly ninety years old when he died. During all that time not a word of regret or complaint was ever heard from my friend's lips. He did not pose as a victim, or show that he had made a sacrifice. Only a few of his more intimate friends knew it.

"But as soon as he was free, he sold the farm,

and went to the city, where he found work more congenial to his taste; and his prosperity and success since have shown what he would have done if he had not sacrificed the most of his life to his sense of filial duty."

No one seemed very ready to speak, when she ceased; there was no outburst of applause. Evidently her prediction had been correct; and the farmer's sacrifice did not touch the same chord as the doctor's. The boys looked at each other.

"Well, twenty years is a long time," Horace said at last, shrugging his shoulders.

"I should have gone," Harry declared positively. "I should have taken a bee-line to the city, and he would have seen the sense of it later, when I came back rich. I would have hired a man to take my place on the farm. Laborers are plenty enough, without making one out of a man who is fit for something better. He was old enough to judge for himself."

"Not too old to remember the command 'Honor thy father,'" said Miss Cecil. "I don't think he has ever regretted his decision. As to the laborers, the father could have hired as many as he liked. He was not poor. But it wasn't the work that he wanted. He wanted his son."

"And then didn't give him a bit of credit for staying," said Tom. "I don't suppose it will ever happen to me to do a fine thing; but if it should, I shall want somebody to know it, and give me a

pat on the back for doing it. I want all my good deeds to be recognized as they deserve!"

"Then it wouldn't be the doing of the fine thing, but the getting due credit for it, that you would aim at," said Louis. "That spoils the doing."

"Can't help it," Tom rejoined good-naturedly. "I'm only human, at present; 'a human boy' Dickens's Chadband would call me. There's nothing angelic or heroic about me yet."

There was a general laugh; the fact was so very self-evident.

"It seems to me," Miss Cecil said, "that noble deeds are generally done just from a desire to do one's duty. When the desire is strong enough to cause all consequences to be forgotten, or risked, we call the act heroic, or chivalric; but it is still duty, at the bottom."

"I fancy those knights of old times had an eye to their own glory," said Tom. "They were human, as well as I."

"I have no doubt they did," she replied, "or they would not have taken such delight in hearing their own praises sung. But when we speak of a chivalric action or of a knightly deed, we mean, you know, that it is like the ideal knight, who has all the virtues, and none of the faults, of the real one."

"I think," Charlie Ray said shyly, "that the John Maynard Mr. Gough told us about — you

heard him, Miss Cecil, that night at Dene — did as brave a thing as anything that Ivanhoe, or Bayard, or any of the rest of them, ever did: and he couldn't have been thinking of glory at all; it was only his duty, and his care for others. I thought of him when you were talking about the firemen."

"Yes, I remember," Miss Cecil said.

"But — excuse me — the rest of us don't!" said George. "What did he do? Tell it, Charlie."

"Oh, I can't. Nobody could tell that but Mr. Gough," Charlie answered.

"But he isn't here, and you are," Horace said. "Come, give us an idea of it, anyway. Who was the man? and what did he do?"

"He was a pilot on Lake Erie," Charlie said. He began with a little timidity, but soon forgot himself in the interest of his narration. It had made a great impression on him when he heard it from the lips of the inimitable Gough; and though he told the story now in his boyish way, he was so earnest about it that it touched the hearts of his listeners.

"He was noted among the other pilots for his skill, and his religion. He was steering a steamer from Detroit to Buffalo one day, when the captain saw smoke coming up from below, and he sent a man down to see what the matter was. The ship was on fire! They did their best to put it out, but it gained on them fast. They had ever so

much rosin and tar on board, and the fire burned so furiously that they could do nothing with it. They were seven miles from the nearest land, and at the best it would take them three-quarters of an hour to get there. They had no boats, so their only hope was to get the steamer to land. Mr. Gough said it was running a race with fire, and life was the prize of the victor.

"The smoke was already bursting out at the end where the pilot was. He sent everybody to the other end of the ship, and stayed there alone at his post, with the smoke curling up round him. The flames broke out in a sheet of fire between them, and hid him from them. All their lives depended upon him. The captain cried out to him through his trumpet. He answered, and he told him which way to steer, and to run the ship on shore.

"She came nearer and nearer to the land, but the fire was gaining too. The captain shouted again. This time he could hardly hear Maynard's voice, it was so faint, and the roar of the fire was so loud, but a smothered 'Ay, ay, sir,' reached him. 'Can you hold on five minutes longer, John?' the captain shouted, and the answer came back through the smoke and flame, 'By God's help, I will!' He was steering in the fire, boys! His hair and his clothes were burned off; he was suffocated with smoke, and one hand was burned so badly that he could not use it, but he managed to steer with the other, and stood firm as a rock.

"He beached the ship, and every man, woman, and child on board was saved. They owed their lives to Maynard; but he, blinded and burned, dropped overboard into the water, and died — a hero's death!"

There was another silence, but this time it was only because no one could speak.

"You were right, Miss Cecil," Tom said at last. "That was duty and self-sacrifice; there could be no thought of glory or fame at such a time. And it makes Ivanhoe's fight there, which I thought was so grand, look like child's play," he ended, giving the picture a little push.

"I must say I like the bravery that shows itself in some magnificent deed like that," George Baker said, "better than the patient, everyday heroism of that farmer. There seems so much more manliness about it. A woman could do one, — I dare say a good many women do, — but it takes a man for the other."

"Well, there was self-sacrifice in both," Louis said thoughtfully; "but one was a sharp, splendid thing, all ended in three-quarters of an hour, and the other a long, steady pull for twenty years. I know which would be the hardest for me!"

"I'm afraid that patient endurance of anything doesn't belong to the list of my virtues," Harry said. "It always seemed to me, as George just said, more of a woman's merit than a man's. I like a man to be a man, every inch of him, and to

do splendid things, man-fashion! I should like to do something myself in that line, if I had the chance."

"I suppose men and women do look at such things differently," Horace said, evidently classing himself with "the men," and casting a half-apologetic glance at Miss Cecil, who only laughed.

"I fancy our ideal knight would not be so very unlike yours," she said gayly. "At least, there would be no more difference than between your ideal woman and ours. I have a description of him somewhere, which I should like to read to you."

She went to her desk, and turned over her papers for a minute or two; then came back to them with the papers she sought, and a copy of Palgrave's "Golden Treasury."

"I have Richard Crashaw's ideal woman here," she said, opening the little book, "and I am going to read you a few verses of it, because the other is its companion picture, and you could hardly appreciate the second without knowing something of the first.

"Whoe'er she be,
That not impossible she,
That shall command my heart and me.

* * * * *

"I wish her beauty
That owes not all its duty
To gaudy tire, or glist'ning shoetie,

"Something more than
Taffeta or tissue can,
Or rampant feather, or rich fan.

"A face that's best
By its own beauty drest,
And can alone command the rest.

"Sydneian showers
Of sweet discourse, whose powers
Can crown old Winter's head with flowers.

* * * * *

"Life, that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes, say 'Welcome, friend.'

"I wish her store
Of worth may leave her poor
Of wishes; and I wish — no more!"

"Good reason why," said Tom. "When your pitcher is full, what is the use of pouring in more?"

"I hope the other is as good as that," Willie said, as Miss Cecil put down the book and took up her paper. "A pretty woman, who cares for something besides dress, knows how to talk, and lives a life worth living!" he summed up. "That's saying a good deal."

"You shall judge," she returned. "I don't know the author of this, but it describes her ideal man, the Bayard of to-day."

"Whoe'er he be,
That not impossible he,
To be hereafter lord of me,

"Though he now lie
Where mortal naked eye
Cannot his shape descry,

"I do believe that he,
Most verily,
In flesh and blood doth wait for me.

"I wish him beauty,
That owes not all its duty
To arts of dress, — pins, rings, or blue tie;

"Something more than
Hats or blacking can,
Which make the fop, and not the man."

An irrepressible burst of hearty laughter interrupted the reader.

"Whoever wrote that doesn't believe in dudes," said Harry. "She goes in for beauty unadorned; a man, and not a fop."

"Hats and blacking are good enough things in their places," Charlie observed.

"Yes, if one has the 'something more' that she speaks of," Horace said. "But even with that there is something in it. A man doesn't look half as much of a man when he is rigged out in a dress coat, with kid gloves and a stove-pipe hat, as he does when he is dressed for a day in the woods, with a suit of flannel, or a belted blouse, and straw hat. Some of the most roughly dressed men I

saw out West were perfect pictures of manliness, straight and strong and active, and the absence of 'the arts of dress' was all in their favor."

"I was thinking of Cooper's Leatherstocking," said George. "He was a fine specimen of a man, in his own rough dress; but if you put him in a tailor's hands, it would take all the manhood out of his looks, if it didn't out of him."

"Seems to be the sentiment that the picture is correct so far, then," said Harry. "Please go on, Miss Cecil."

> "An eye that's bright
> With youth's own eagle light,
> And needs no 'glass' for sight."

"Now that is rather hard on near-sighted people," Willie said, swinging on one finger the eye-glasses that he always carried hanging from a chain round his neck. "My eyes are young enough, so far as that goes, but I am afraid their 'eagle light' wouldn't carry me far, so there's no chance for me."

"Oh, don't despair," Horace said consolingly. "I fancy that was sent to the address of the aforesaid dudes, who carry a glass for fashion's sake, when they don't need it any more than a squirrel needs a ladder."

"My glasses are a necessity, any way," said Willie.

> "A stately form, and tall,
> Highest in field and hall,
> As was of old, King Saul."

"Rather hard on short people, like you and me, Louis," said George, in his turn. "I don't see but that we are left out in the cold, as well as Willie."

"Let's grow!" said Louis promptly.

"Oh, there's a chance for you," Willie said. "There's time enough before you, and see how you have been shooting up lately. You may measure six feet in your stockings yet!"

"Standing among men, proud,
With a free step, uncowed,
With a high head, unbowed."

"That's the kind of man I like," said Louis. "Wasn't that verse fine? I do like this so much!"

"Tender to woman's tears,
Pity for maiden's fears,
Kind words for children's ears."

"Now I call that finer," said Charlie. "It is like something I read the other day about 'the tenderness of the strong being doubly sweet.'"

"I'll agree to that," said Louis. "But of course this verse belongs with the one before it. Putting the two together makes a magnificent man."

"A true heart, and a clear head,
Yet not all Euclid-bred,
Or on stale classics fed;

"One who can ride to hounds,
And loveth sylvan sounds,
But is not 'horsey' without bounds.

"One who can steer and scull,
A 'biceps' that can pull
Up-stream a whole boatful."

"Oh, hurrah!" called out two or three together. There was a little breeze of laughter and chatter, and a general seconding of Louis' eager request.

"Please read that once more."

"That's fine, if you like," said Harry. "That's what I call a real man."

"Yes, indeed," said Horace. "Tall, and straight, and strong, can ride a bucking broncho, and pull stroke oar, has a clear brain of his own, and a kind heart; no student, bent double over his books, looking 'pale and interesting,' — fudge! This is my ideal man. I don't know what more anybody could want."

Miss Cecil answered with the remaining verses.

"Yet with a soul, and parts
For finer, gentler arts,
That live in noble hearts;

"One who can rise and sing
When maidens wake the string,
And softest cadence fling.

"A fair, good name,
Perhaps no renown or fame,
At least, no taint of shame.

"A manly grace,
That looks you in the face,
And owns to no disgrace.

"Now, if Time knows
This him, for whose high brows
There waits my wreath of vows,

"He that dares be
What these lines wish to see,
I seek no further — it is he!"

"'It is he!'" Tom repeated with a comical face. "I should think it was, just he! She had better 'seek no further'! Who ever saw such a marvel of a man?"

"Well, I guess you don't expect to often see ideal men walking with two feet on the common earth," Willie said.

"Do you mean that they walk on four feet?" Tom inquired. "I'm not posted about them."

"I mean that I fancy they generally use wings to go about with," Willie answered.

"I've heard my grandmother talk about a Sir Charles Grandison, the hero of some famous book, written ages ago," said George. "From her account of him, I should say that he might fill the bill, if he was only alive."

"Or ever had been," added Tom.

"Don't despair, boys," said Miss Cecil; "I think you will find that you each know quite a number of people, who will answer in all essential points to the description."

Though she controlled her face and voice perfectly, as she thought, there was something indefinable remaining, which assured the observant

boys that she at least knew where to look for one.

"You know you have already proved to-night that you don't always recognize true knights when you see them," she continued.

"Ah, that was because we were not looking for them so near home," Charlie said.

"Or because you thought of the knights of the old chivalric days as being more heroic, and having higher aims, than men have now, which was a mistake. They aimed at victory, for the sake of glory; the knights of to-day aim at duty, for conscience' sake, and they do it even when it brings them face to face with death. You could find our ideal man almost anywhere in our land."

"I think I'll go on a hunt!" said Tom.

"You would not have to go far," she replied. "It isn't necessary to follow out all the smaller points; that he should have 'a stately form and tall,' for example, or be able to 'rise and sing, when maidens wake the string.' He might have some other accomplishment that was quite as much to the purpose, though he could not sing a note; and inches don't make a man.

"But take only the general characteristics: that he is courteous and gentle to women and children, while he holds his own among men; has a true heart, a clear head, and a good name; physical strength and grace, and a frank, cordial manner,— don't you all know men who will answer that

description? I am sure you do; and I don't know any reason why every one of you shouldn't become just such a man."

"I don't suppose it would hurt any of us to try for it, at any rate," Louis said.

"Nor I," said Harry. "The higher a fellow puts his mark, the higher he shoots."

"But though I like this as much as you do, as far as it goes," Miss Cecil said, looking at the verses, "it is not quite my ideal yet."

"What? More still?" Tom said, in ludicrous surprise.

"More still," she assented. "To my mind, the author has left out the crown of the whole, and I should want another verse added."

"What would it be?" Harry asked curiously. "Body, mind, accomplishments, disposition, manners, character; the verses took them all in. I can't think of anything more."

"Not even a heart?" said Miss Cecil. "I'm not much of a poet, and I could say what I want to have added much better in plain prose than in rhyme. Let me see; I think it should run something like this: —

> "A heart to beat,
> With love and reverence sweet,
> That lays the whole at Jesus' feet.

"I should put in something like that just before the last two verses. I don't think any character, real or ideal, can be complete, fully rounded out, that leaves out loyalty to God."

She said it in exactly the same tone that she had used in discussing the other verses, and the boys took it in just the same way.

An old Scotchwoman once asked her grandson to read the newspaper to her. He was proud of his skill in reading, and wishing to impress her with a due sense of it, he imitated, as far as possible, the manner of his minister. The poor boy was greatly surprised, when, instead of giving him the praise he expected, the old woman sprung up, and cuffed his ears vigorously, exclaiming with indignation: —

"I'll teach ye, ye ne'er-do-weel, to read the newspaper with the pulpit twang!"

Miss Cecil never used a "pulpit twang" in speaking of religious things. It was said of Dr. Goodell of St. Louis, that it was just as natural for him to make a religious remark as to make one about the weather; and it was as true of Miss Huntington. It was not as a duty, but as a pleasure, that she did it; for it was pleasant and natural to speak of the theme of which she oftenest thought, and she always used the same bright, cheery tone and manner that she used in speaking of other things.

So her boys were not repelled by a sanctimonious tone, or a long face, but came to believe that, to their teacher at least, religion was a delight, and "heaven, and the way thither," among the pleasantest subjects she could talk about, they came so naturally from her lips.

"But you make it harder than it was before," Tom objected. "If you put the mark too high, one will have no courage to shoot."

"Oh, this makes it easier," she answered brightly. "Of course, I don't mean that it would make you grow taller, or teach you how to row or to sing, but all the rest of it is nothing but religion put into every-day life. With that one thing added, it is just a description of a true Christian gentleman, and that is something that you all can be, and that I hope you all will be."

"I should like to copy those verses, if I may, Miss Cecil," Louis said. "It will be a good thing to have a pattern that one can look at once in a while."

"Let's all do it," Harry proposed. "We can keep them for a kind of reminder of our knight evening."

"That's a good idea," said Willie.

"Will you let me copy them for you?" Miss Cecil asked.

"Oh, thank you!" Louis said, speaking for all. "We shall care a great deal more for them. And please put your verse in with the rest."

"Very well. That, or something better," she said. "And you shall have them next Sunday."

At this point Ulla came in, and looking a little shyly at the boys, said to her young mistress, in a low voice: —

"Aunt Huldah bids me tell you the refreshments is ready."

Tom Perkins' lips twitched in an incipient laugh; but Willie, who was nearest him, gave him a gentle pinch, and a whispered admonition.

"Take care! Don't forget so soon! We were to be courteous to women."

"Ulla is nothing but a girl!" Tom whispered back.

"'To women and children,'" Willie quoted. "She is one or the other, anyway; and if we are going to begin right, I don't believe we ought to laugh at her mistakes."

"No more do I," said Tom. "How should she know any better? I don't talk straight myself, half the time."

And thereupon he became preternaturally grave, and looked round to see if any one had noticed that he had been tempted to laugh.

Meantime, a new idea had occurred to Miss Cecil, and she took her guests into council.

"I have some ice cream and strawberries for you, boys," she said. "Would you rather go into the dining-room, and eat them in propriety and state, or take them out on the veranda for a little feast by moonlight? You shall do as you choose."

From the expression of their faces, as they glanced out to the moonlit veranda, she had no doubt of their choice; but they looked at each other, and each waited for some other one to speak.

"Perhaps we can find the sense of the meeting

by a vote," she said, to the great amusement of Ulla, who waited until the point should be decided. "Those in favor of the dining-room will say Aye!"

Dead silence followed, and then a general laugh.

"We shall all vote for the moonlight, Miss Cecil," Harry said. "Only see how pleasant it looks out there."

"But were you all afraid to say so?" she asked, beginning to remove flowers and books from a little table, in which she had instant help. "We shall want this carried out, and some chairs. Will any one volunteer for that duty?"

Chairs and table found themselves on the other side of the window in a twinkling, and the party were presently established in great comfort on the wide veranda, where Ulla supplied each with a saucer of strawberries, duly sugared and creamed.

"How delightful this is!" Tom said, with great satisfaction.

"Meaning the strawberries?" asked Horace.

"Meaning the whole thing; the strawberries, and the moonlight, and the company," Tom rejoined, embracing the whole with a sweeping gesture. "It makes me feel very comfortable and contented!"

"That is exactly the effect it has upon me!" said a voice close by. "On the principle of sympathy between great minds, I conclude that you must be a remarkably sensible young man, Tom!"

No one in the midst of the pleasant commotion of voices, — for all seemed to be talking together, — had heard the sound of the closing gate, or of a step on the gravelled walk; but still there stood Dr. Gardiner.

"Good evening, Miss Huntington," he said, raising his hat. "May I join this pleasant party? I am glad to see that I am just in time to come in for a share of the good things going. It is better fortune than a self-invited guest deserves. I am boy enough still to enjoy goodies. Oh, thank you, Ulla," as she brought him a chair, and Miss Cecil gave him a dish of berries, and put the cake-basket within his reach. "Now I'm going to be 'comfortable and contented,' Tom."

The boys were inclined to be rather shy of the newcomer at first. They felt a little as if the brave deed, of which they had just heard, had put him up on a pinnacle, out of their reach. But it was impossible to resist his frank cordiality, and presently they were all chatting happily together. The strawberries disappeared like dew before the sun, followed by the ice-cream, which was a much-prized novelty to most of the boys.

"Now, if we had only one thing more, Miss Cecil," Louis said coaxingly, after whispering a minute with the boys nearest him, while Ulla carried away the dishes.

"Well, what is it, Louis?" she said encouragingly. "If it is anything I can get for you, I am

safe in promising it, since I haven't a kingdom to divide. Not the roc's egg, is it?"

"No, indeed," he said. "I don't know what that is, only that it isn't what we want. But if you would sing for us a little? It would be so delightful, music and moonlight together!"

"Very well," she said readily. "What shall I sing?"

"Oh, anything," Louis said. "We don't care what it is. The multiplication table, if you choose! We all like so much to hear you sing."

"It will put the crown on our evening," Harry said gallantly, drawing his chair nearer, and preparing to listen. "So say we all of us."

"I am very glad that I can give you pleasure so easily," Miss Cecil said. "I didn't know what impossible thing you might be going to ask."

She began immediately, and presently Dr. Gardiner's fine tenor voice chimed in with her sweet soprano.

They began with college songs, of which Miss Cecil had good store, to the perfect delight of their auditors, who soon caught up the choruses, and joined in them with great zest and striking effect.

Windows were softly pushed up in the neighboring houses, as the sweet sounds floated out on the still evening air, and a clapping of hands was heard once or twice, after some particularly successful song, to the great amusement of the boys.

The parlor door, too, was gently opened, and from where Miss Huntington sat, she could see Ulla and Aunt Huldah enjoying their share of the music.

The college songs were followed by one or two ballads, which Dr. Gardiner suggested, and then the stirring notes of

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war!"

rang out. Every voice joined in that, and Miss Huntington, hearing Ulla's clear strong alto mingling with the others, called her to come and sing with them. One after another named a favorite hymn, or Miss Cecil or Dr. Gardiner began one without naming it, and the others joined in as soon as they caught the first notes. From the auditors at the adjacent windows, too, other voices added themselves to the chorus, and the impromptu concert grew in interest.

The time passed so quickly, that the young guests were astonished when the striking of the clock told them the hour. They stayed not on the order of their going, but hurried away.

"It was so pleasant, that we never thought how late it was getting," Harry said, by way of apology. "We have had just the most delightful evening, Miss Cecil!"

"So have I," she said sincerely. "I am glad you have enjoyed it, for you will perhaps be willing to come again."

Late as it was, she detained Louis for a few minutes, while she filled a little basket with strawberries for Freda.

"Give them to her with my love," she said, "and tell her I shall come to see her to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

"Let us be content, in work,
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little."

—MRS. E. B. BROWNING.

THE next day was a red-letter day for Freda. It is true that she was alone for a good many of its hours, while Louis was at school, or at the Lawrence farm, and Mrs. Thorne was away searching for work.

But while Louis was at home, he had a great deal to tell her about the night before, and when he left her, she had her basket of strawberries, which she kept on a table by her bed, indulging herself, at long intervals, with eating one, and then amusing herself by selecting the one which should go next. The little basket held a wonderful amount of pleasure for the lonely child.

But a greater delight was in store for her in the afternoon. Miss Huntington came to make her promised visit, and she brought for her some of the very ice cream which Louis had tried, without much success, to describe to her.

The little dish was packed in ice, and the mere sight of it seemed to make the hot room cooler. Miss Cecil asked directions for finding a spoon,

and herself put the first taste between the child's hot, parched lips, quite repaid for her trouble by seeing the expression of delight which overspread her face, and hearing her exclamations of pleasure.

Freda made the treat last as long as possible, taking little bird-like pecks at it, and when it was gone, she begged her friend to sing to her, as she did to the boys. "And so I heard some of the very same songs she sung to you last night," she told Louis afterwards with great glee; and then she told her stories, till the little girl had enough to think of for days, living that happy afternoon over again in her thoughts, whenever she was left alone.

Before Miss Cecil went away, Mrs. Thorne came home, tired, and still having met with no success, but not discouraged.

"It is darkest just before dawn," she said to her sympathizing visitor. "I often have to remind myself of that. And yet we are not so badly off as we might be, for I have enough left from my last straw work for our most pressing needs, and Louis earns a little every day now. If we had to depend entirely upon his earnings, it would be rather bad, but I hope to find something to do before my purse is empty. I thought I should easily find plain sewing, but no one seems to have it for me. I feel sure there must be some work somewhere waiting for me, if I can only find it!"

"I will ask my good Huldah about it," Miss

Cecil promised. "She often finds the way out of a difficulty when I cannot, and she will be likely to know more about the possibility of getting work than I do."

Huldah interested herself in the matter at once, and went to see Mrs. Thorne as soon as possible.

"When people just settle back at their ease, and wait for their friends to support them, I have no patience with them," she said, "and nothing to say to them; for if I once began freeing my mind, I should be sure to say too much, so I stop before I begin; but when people only ask for a chance to work, I think they ought to have it, and I'm glad to help them get it."

So thinking, she sympathized heartily with Mrs. Thorne.

"Of course you want to stay at home with that poor child," she said, "if there's any work to be had that will allow it. It is pretty hard for her to be left alone so much, though she is so good about it. But plain sewing! Why, you wouldn't earn enough by your needle, in these days of sewing-machines and ready-made garments, to buy the salt for your porridge!"

"My needle earned enough to support us while my straw work lasted," Mrs. Thorne said, drawing herself up a little.

"Oh, yes, I dare say, but that is different from plain sewing," Huldah rejoined. "People in this place are not rich enough to hire their sewing

done, and pay living prices for it; and they do their own fancy work, for the pleasure of it. Then there's not the ghost of a chance to find a place in any of the so-called 'lady-like occupations,' — school teacher, clerk, companion, or the like. There's a perfect rush whenever there is a vacancy. There's a music-teacher to every piano in town, even if you knew how to play."

"Which I don't," Mrs. Thorne interjected.

"Now, if you had ever learned a trade, it would come in handy. Do you know anything about milliner's work? About dress-making? That's a pity. It would have given you a chance. There's Emma Daniels and Mary Roberts driven half to death with work, and people have to engage them months beforehand. If you knew their trade, and were content to work at reasonable prices, you would soon find that you had your hands full. But if you don't, you don't, and there's an end of that."

She reflected a little.

"For the real hard work of common people, the door is always open," she said with some hesitation, "and there's always room for more. There are two or three women, like Mrs. O'Brien, in town, who make a very good living by going out washing and house-cleaning. They are always in demand. Maggie says if she had twenty fingers instead of ten, there need not be an idle one among them. But you are not strong enough for

that kind of work, even if you were willing to do it."

"That 'if' is very unnecessary," Mrs. Thorne said quickly. "I am willing to do anything. But I am afraid I could not work all day, as Mrs. O'Brien does, and such work must be finished when it is begun. I have often envied her strength."

"You could not do house-cleaning as she does, certainly," said Huldah; "and then, there's Freda. But I have an idea. I heard Mrs. Russell saying to Miss Huntington the other day, that she was without help now, and would be glad to do her own housework for awhile, if she could only find any one who would take her weekly washing home, and bring it back to her nicely ironed. I presume she would be glad to give it to you; and if I could find some one else who would like to make the same arrangements, would you be strong enough to take the two?"

"I think so," Mrs. Thorne said; "I can but try."

"It would not be so hard as working all day and every day, like Maggie O'Brien," said Huldah, "and you would be at home with Freda. It seems to me that it might answer very well until something better turns up. It will not interfere with your doing something else the rest of the time."

"I shall be very glad of the work," Mrs. Thorne said without hesitation. "The money for it will

be a great help, and I think I am quite strong enough to undertake two washings, and do something more, if I can get it."

"Then I will call at Mrs. Russell's before I go home," Huldah said, rising. She never let grass grow under her feet. "Perhaps she may be able to tell me of some one else."

"But you must let me thank you, Miss Huldah," Mrs. Thorne said. "You are bringing me just the help I wanted, and I am very grateful to you."

"Not at all," Huldah said briskly. "It is only a pleasure to help people who are willing to help themselves. We'll have you well set up in the laundry business before long. I will watch for Louis when he comes home from school to-night, and send you word what Mrs. Russell says."

Any business that Huldah took in hand was pretty sure to be quickly and successfully done, she was so energetic, and so thoroughly in earnest about it. When Louis came from school at night, he brought a message from her, that Mrs. Russell's basket would be ready Monday morning, and Mrs. Baker's Wednesday.

She had given him no explanations, and he was curious to know what the message meant, but was very indignant when he found out. It seemed to him a degradation for his mother to become a washerwoman, and he protested earnestly against it. It was all very well for women like Maggie O'Brien,

he said, who were fit for nothing better; but his mother never should do it, and he begged for leave to go back and say that she had changed her mind.

"But I have not changed it, my dear boy," his mother said. "This, with what you can earn, will keep us above want until we are able to get something better to do. And as for the rest, I hope my character as a lady does not depend on the use I make of my hands. If I am a lady when I am arranging flowers, or even when I am sewing straw, and something else when I stand at the wash-tub, it is just as well to find it out. You must be reasonable, Louis. What difference does it make whether I get my living out of a bunch of straw, or out of a tub of water? If my work is different, I shall be the same."

"You may be the same, but people won't treat you the same," Louis said, with a disregard of grammar, but with a touch of worldly wisdom. "You know ever so many of the ladies in the village sew straw, just to get a little odd change for pocket-money; it is such light, clean work, they say, and pays so well. Nobody thinks any the worse of anybody for doing that, because everybody does it; but you never hear of any lady taking in washing; only such people as Maggie O'Brien do that; and they will put you on a level with her before you know it."

"She won't stay put, if they do!" Freda interposed indignantly.

She had been looking from one to the other in perplexity, during their talk, and finally put in her word. Louis could not help laughing.

"I am not afraid of losing any friends that I really value," Mrs. Thorne said quietly. "We must get the means of living from some source. Can you think of a better one? Do you think I should be more respected, or more worthy of respect, if I accepted charity? Of course, if I had my choice of work, I should hardly choose this; but we must take what we can get, not what we want to get. It will not be so bad as you think; and even if it was, I would do more than this for my children."

"You are just the dearest mother children ever had!" Louis exclaimed impulsively. "You never think of yourself, I believe; and it's all the more reason why I should think of you. The sacrifices ought to be on my side instead of yours. I do wish I was a man, and then we'd see!"

"You are getting on toward it quite fast enough," his mother said, patting his shoulder. "At present you are doing a boy's work, and doing it well, as far as I see, so I think we will be satisfied. And don't make yourself unhappy about the washing. It is only a temporary expedient, and a very good one. I don't intend to be a washerwoman for the rest of my life, nor to have you dig potatoes for the rest of yours. But we will both make up our minds to do these things

well, until we find something better to do, and I hope that you and I are never going to be ashamed of doing any honest work."

Louis shook his head, as if he was not quite sure of that; but he only said: —

"If I ever am, I shall think of you and your wash-tub, and be ashamed of myself."

He did think of it to such purpose that, when Monday morning came, he not only found time to go for Mrs. Russell's basket, which was a task against which he had mentally protested, but he went before his mother could ask him to do it, and even took the dry clothes from the lines at noon, and helped her to fold them. She would have been amused, if she had heard his reasoning.

"If mother can do her share, I can do mine," he said to himself. "Perhaps this is a bit of the knightly service that Miss Cecil was telling us of. I'm sure I hate it as much as her friend hated farming. There's no glory about a wash-tub, but there seems to be some duty, and that is the better thing. I can't nurse yellow fever patients like Dr. Gardiner, but I can help mother to fold sheets. Miss Cecil said knights had to be squires first, and learn by practice, and we couldn't begin too soon if we wanted to win our spurs. I guess this is my chance to begin. I know I can only do little things while I'm nothing but a boy, but I may as well be getting into training; and since I am going to help my mother, these clothes will do as well as anything else for a beginning."

So he sprinkled Willie Russell's shirts, wondered what Willie would say if he saw him doing it, and considered how "the Knight of the Wash-tub" would sound in a tournament.

Huldah not only secured the two washings for Mrs. Thorne, but she also found three ladies who were glad to pay a small sum for having their mending done each week. It was only a trifle, but, as she sensibly observed, "Trifles help."

Putting the family earnings together, Mrs. Thorne was glad to feel moderately certain of keeping the wolf from the door for the present. Freda found the comfort of having her mother beside her with her mending-basket, or at least within reach of her voice; and even Louis became accustomed to the new order of things.

CHAPTER VII.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

— CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT.

AT the close of Sunday-school the week after their "knight evening," as they came to call it, Miss Huntington's class received their verses according to her promise. They were written on thick, smooth cards, in her clear, pretty handwriting, which Tom Perkins declared was "plainer than print, and twice as good." To each copy was added a Scripture reference; and Bibles came into requisition to find out what they were, before the boys separated.

Harry found his first, and read it to the others: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

Charlie Ray's was, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another."

"Most men prefer to keep all the honor they can get for themselves," he commented. "I don't think I should call that an easy thing to do."

"Perhaps, then, you will think mine is easier," said Willie. "I'll exchange. Just listen: —

"'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

"I suppose that means do them," he said. "I think that covers the whole ground pretty well. If one could only do all that, he might be a knight 'sans peur et sans reproche.'"

"Don't talk Greek!" said Horace. "Hear mine: —

"'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'

"According to that we can all equal Bayard."

"I don't know about that. It isn't a very easy thing to do sometimes," Harry demurred. He had a quick temper, and knew the difficulty of controlling it. "I'm sure I have seen times when it would have been ever so much easier to drive a lance at somebody, or to dash at city ramparts, than to rein myself in."

"Oh, well," Horace said, "the text doesn't say that it is easier to keep yourself in hand; it only says it is better."

"This is mine," said Tom. "'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.'

"The 'courteous and kind' was a free translation of that, I take it."

"That is what Miss Cecil's farmer friend was doing, it seems to me," said Charlie.

"Here's another," said George. "'Their great ones exercise authority upon them, but so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.'

"I should say that was the kind of thing that Dr. Gardiner did."

"So should I," said Harry. "You come last, Louis."

"So I ought; for mine seems to sum up the whole," Louis said, "and gets one ready for all yours.

"'Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

"'And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.'"

"That gives a pretty good outfit, doesn't it?" Tom said, not irreverently.

"I had no idea that there was such a description of a knight's armor in the Bible, or, for that matter, such a description of what a Christian knight ought to be as the other verses gave," said Charlie. "I suppose I ought to have known, but I never noticed them."

"We thought a knight needn't be afraid of much, inside his helmet and coat of mail," Louis said, putting his card carefully back into its envelope. "I'm sure one needn't be afraid of anything with all this armor on. It would be very easy then to carry out all our texts."

"How nicely Miss Cecil got these cards up for us!" Willie said, looking again at his. "Anything that she touches has just that look. They will stand a good deal of wear, too; and I shouldn't wonder if mine got it. It will pay to look at it once in awhile."

They had been standing in a group just outside of the church, under a large tree, while they looked up their references, and compared the cards. Now they strolled off together, chatting as they went, and only Harry noticed that Louis was not with them.

"It can't be that old jacket again," he said. "He's getting used to that. Unless he has heard somebody say something."

But they always walked home together, so he

stepped back to find him. He saw him standing by the church door, looking in, and thought he was looking for him, so he said: —

"Here I am, Louis. Come along."

"I thought you had gone. Don't wait for me," Louis said, with a little embarrassment. "I'm stopping to speak to Miss Cecil for a minute, when she comes out, and Mrs. Brown is talking to her."

"Oh, I'd just as soon wait as not. I'm not in any hurry," Harry answered readily, the idea that his friend would have preferred his absence, and thought he had secured it, never occurring to him.

Louis said no more; he half moved as if to go with him; but after that minute's hesitation, his face took a more resolute look. He paid no more attention to Harry, who waited his pleasure, and amused himself by watching the departing congregation.

Louis lingered by the door until Miss Huntington came out. She had stayed to speak to a friend, and did not appear until almost every one had left the church; but he kept his post, and waited patiently.

Her face lighted up when she saw him, and a friendly glance and gesture brought him to her side. The three walked on together; but even then he seemed to have some difficulty in beginning what he wanted to say, and Harry wondered what it could be.

"What is it, Louis?" Miss Cecil at last said kindly. "You wanted to speak to me, didn't you?"

For answer he drew out his card. She began to understand.

"Is it about the armor?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, and gaining firmness as he went on, he said frankly, "I want it for myself, Miss Cecil. Will you tell me how I can get it?"

Harry said nothing, but Louis could *feel* the surprise on his face, though he did not look at him, and now that the ice was fairly broken, he found that he did not care much for what any one might think. The one thing he did care for was the answer to his question.

"You can only get it by asking God for it," Miss Cecil said reverently. "No efforts of your own, nothing that you can do, will earn it or buy it. It is a free gift from God to those who choose to serve Him, and no others ever have it. Do you know how a soldier gets his uniform and equipments in our army? He doesn't buy them; he can't borrow them. He has only to enlist, to promise to serve as a soldier, and then everything is provided for him. It is exactly so in God's army. You have only to enlist, and He supplies you with this complete armor. All you have to do in return is to thank Him, put it on, and use it."

"But," Louis said thoughtfully, "enlist? I

don't think I understand. Enlist in God's army? How can I do it? What am I to do?"

"What would you do, if you wanted to be a soldier in the United States army?" Cecil answered. "You would decide that you wanted to leave the civilian life with all its occupations, and its comparative freedom from rules; and enter upon the military life, with the occupations that are peculiar to that, and submit to the rules that belong to it. You would think of what you were giving up, and what you were going to undertake, and make your choice between the two. Then you would pledge yourself to do it; in other words, you would enlist; and from that moment you would be a soldier, an awkward, untrained one at first, but still a soldier. That is exactly what you must do to join God's army. You make your choice between the world and God, and you choose Him, and pledge yourself to serve Him."

"That is the thing that puzzles me," said Harry, who had been listening with as close attention as Louis himself. "You know I'm not a Christian, and so I suppose you would say that I have chosen the world instead of God. But I don't choose it. I never did. What have I got to do with it, anyway? I don't know anything about it. I hear Mr. Russell talking about it in his sermons, and it seems to be something wicked, but I don't know what shape it takes. Here I am in school six hours a day, and I'm at home on the farm the

other eighteen, as a general thing. Where does the chance for my 'choosing the world' come in? And how can I give up what I haven't got, and never had, if I wanted to ever so much?"

"Saying 'the world' is only a comprehensive way of speaking," Miss Cecil said. "Let me put it in other words, and you will understand it better, perhaps. Think over your life, all the things you have done since you can remember. Haven't you done this, or that, or the other thing, because it was pleasant to do it, because it seemed reasonable to do it, because your friends wanted you to do it, because you were afraid of the consequences if you did not do it? Can you remember anything that you did only because you thought God wished you to do it, and you wanted to please Him?"

Harry and Louis looked at each other, and each shook his head.

"That is what we mean by choosing the world," said Miss Cecil. "It is letting something besides God's will be the rule of your life. 'The world' is only the general name for that something. You can see that it is in the schoolroom, and on the farm, as much as anywhere else. So when you enlist in God's army, you give that something up, whatever it is. You are sorry that you have allowed it to govern your actions so long, and you promise that, with God's help, it shall do so no longer, but that your first thought about everything shall be what God would wish you to do,

and then that you will try to do it. That is what it means to be a Christian, a loyal servant of his King. He is sorry for the time he has spent in rebellion against Him, is grateful for the pardon which He is always ready to give to any one who asks for it, and is resolved to serve Him for the rest of his life. So he takes pains to find out what He wants him to do, and does it with all his heart."

"But really," said Harry, "it doesn't seem to me that all Christians do that! What do you say to —"

He seemed going on to give examples. But she checked him.

"You may be sure that it is what all true Christians want to do," she said; "and though they often fail, they know of their failures even better than we, who are watching them, and they are more sorry for them, perhaps, than you guess. You can't tell what they may have to fight against. But we need not look at them for examples, since we have a perfect one to imitate. If you wanted to know what kind of a soldier you should be, you would not look at the poorest soldiers in the army, who were continually making blunders and breaking rules, and getting reprimanded and punished; you would say you had nothing to do with them; and you would look at the best men, who did their duty faithfully, were commended by their officers, and were in a fair way to promotion. Do as much in the Christian army."

They had reached her home, but she stopped a minute before going in.

"I would not think about other people," she said. "Think about yourselves. Is there any reason why you should not pledge your lives to Christ *now*, to be used faithfully for His service? Louis? Harry?"

She turned from one to the other.

"I cannot promise now," Louis said; "I will think of it."

"So will I," said Harry.

"Is it so hard to choose between God and the world, the something that has ruled your lives so far?" she said. "Remember that I am praying for you, my dear boys, that you may listen to my Saviour's call. Yes, He is calling you both. Don't think of anything else until you have decided how you will answer Him, and pray that He may help you to decide for Him."

"I will think of it," Louis repeated very gravely. He seemed unable to say anything more. "And I thank you, Miss Cecil."

Harry was silent; but when they had left her, and had gone on a few steps, he turned, and looked steadily at Louis.

"How long have you been thinking of this?" he demanded.

"Off and on for some time," Louis said, answering as directly as he was asked. "More, since our 'knight evening' at Miss Cecil's, and most,

since I read those verses about the armor to-day. I am sure she meant to show us that a true knight must be a Christian man. Don't you remember her saying, the other night, that, 'no ideal of character could be complete that left out loyalty to God'? I have thought of that very often since."

"'Very often,'" Harry repeated in an injured tone; "and yet you said not a word to me about it! Unless I had waited at the church for you, I suppose I should never have heard anything of it. Was it a thing that concerned nobody but you? Why didn't you tell me, if, as you say, you have been 'thinking of it for some time'?"

"I didn't suppose you would care about it." Louis said, much astonished at being called to account in this way.

"Well, it just happens that I do care," Harry returned, in nowise mollified. "If people pretend to be friends, they ought to act like friends. And I don't know any better way to find out whether I cared or not, than to ask me. I suppose I should be likely to give a civil answer, anyway. You are not so particular about other things. I don't think you generally stop to ask whether I should probably be interested or not, before you tell me anything that concerns you. You just tell it, and see whether I care for it."

"I ought to have told you this," Louis admitted; "but better late than never. You know it now, at any rate."

"So I do," Harry said, "after having my breath taken away by your startling anouncement to Miss Cecil. I could hardly believe my ears. Now, the next thing I want to know is, what you are going to do about it?"

"I can't do anything all in a minute," said Louis; "I'm going to think it over, just as I told Miss Cecil. Now the question has come up, it has got to be decided, one way or the other. Letting it drop again would be the same thing as deciding it. I don't dare to dispose of it in any way except one, and yet, you can see, Harry, it isn't a thing a fellow can jump at. If I enlist in our army for a certain time, I'm there, and I've got to stay there, whether I like it or not, till my time is up. But if I enlist in this other army, the time is never up. I must do it for always."

"Of course you must," Harry said. "Only fancy anybody having Christ for his best friend for five years, and then giving Him up!"

"Yes, I know it is ridiculous on the very face of it," said Louis. "But when one thinks of pledging himself, and all that he has, or ever may have, for all the rest of his life, it is a serious thing, and one ought to count the cost. You see such a pledge as this means a good deal."

"I believe you!" said Harry. "But while we are about it, we might 'count the cost' of *not* giving it."

"'To find out what God's will is in everything, and to do it,' Miss Cecil said," Louis went on, so engrossed in his own thoughts that he did not notice Harry's suggestion. "Suppose I wanted to do one thing, and I knew He wanted me to do another, could I always give up? If I choose Christ for my Captain, and enlist with Him, it means promising always to give up my own wishes, when they are not like His, and to carry out His instead of mine. *Always!* One can't compromise on half the time. It is all, or nothing. Now, that is a good deal to promise, and I can't give the pledge unless I really mean it, because He will know whether I mean it or not. There might come times when there would be a hard pull, for I do like to have my own way, sometimes."

"Yes, I know it," Harry said, half smiling; "but I guess there is such a thing as making His way your way. Growing so much like Him I mean, that the things He wants you to do will be just the things you want to do."

"Perhaps," Louis said a little doubtfully. "I am afraid I should have to be wonderfully changed. But that reminds me of another thing. Who knows what He might want me to do? Be a missionary perhaps! And if I promise, I've got to do it, whatever it is. Do you remember that story that Miss Cecil told us of Earl Douglas?"

Harry shook his head. "I don't think I heard it," he said.

"Oh, I recollect; it was the day you were at your uncle's," Louis replied. "She said that after the death of Robert Bruce (that brave king of Scotland, you know; the one who saw the spider), Douglas had his heart embalmed, and put in a casket, and wore it over his own heart. And once he was in the midst of a battle, fighting bravely, but surrounded by his enemies, and he found that he was going to be defeated unless something desperate was done. He snatched off the casket, and threw it with all his strength into the middle of his foes, shouting out, 'Lead on, brave heart, as thou wast wont, and where thou leadest, Douglas will follow, or die.' Don't you see, it is the same thing here? Where Christ leads, a Christian must follow, if it is into the thickest of the fight. I tell you, it is good deal to promise, Harry, and if I do it, it must be with my eyes open. It is such a serious thing, that I don't dare to give such a pledge on the impulse of a moment. Suppose I should enlist, and then show myself a cowardly deserter, when the first pinch came! I've got to think it over."

"But it seems to me that you forget that a soldier gets the armor as soon as he enlists," Harry suggested. "He wouldn't be very likely to desert with that on. I don't see how he could."

Louis looked at him as if taking in a new idea.

"Sure enough," he said slowly. "Well, it just

proves what I said, that I must think it over. But you know the good of that armor as well as I do. Why don't you put it on yourself? Come with me, Harry, and let us begin together."

"Come where?" said Harry. "I thought you had not decided yet which way to take! I had better see where you go, before I promise to go with you. I'll think of it, as you say, but really there seems to be only one side to the question. I haven't got so far as to think what I should do, if — and if — and if! But I will think about it, and we can compare results in the morning. It is lucky for me that I waited for you to-day, but I don't understand yet how you could get hold of such a thing, and keep it all to yourself."

"How could I tell how you would take it? If anything had been settled, it would have been different. When one is a Christian, it is his business to tell everybody he can. But I'm glad now that you waited to come home with me, though I did wish you were in Jericho," Louis confessed, "for a minute or two. I was enough of a coward to be afraid that you would laugh at me; and if something had not impressed me with a feeling that I must speak to Miss Cecil then, come what might, I do believe I should have walked off with you, and said nothing about it."

"I should never have guessed that you were afraid," Harry said dryly. "You kept it pretty well to yourself. It's a new thing for you to be

afraid of my laughing at you. If you really wanted that armor, I don't see why you need care if every boy in town laughed when you asked how you were to get it. I say, Louis," he added in a different tone, a minute later, "do you suppose that 'something' that kept you there was the prompting of the Holy Spirit, that Mr. Russell preached about last Sunday?"

"I never thought of it," Louis said, much impressed by the suggestion. "Could it have been that? It did seem to be something outside of myself that made me think at first of speaking to Miss Cecil, and then made me do it, even after you came, when I was half ashamed and half afraid. If it was the Holy Spirit, do you suppose He is watching to see what comes of it?"

His voice was lower. He seemed to feel the Invisible Presence near him.

"I don't know," Harry said. "If He did the one, I should think He would be likely to do the other. At any rate, it is wonderfully like what Mr. Russell said last Sunday. What I do know is, that Miss Cecil is praying for us; for you know she said she should, and it seems to me that the best thing we can do is to pray for ourselves. I don't suppose either of us have any doubt as to how we ought to decide; and if we can't bring ourselves to do it, I believe God can, and we had better ask Him to help us. That's what I mean to do. Good by, Louis. I'll see you in the morning."

He turned off on the short path through the fields to the farm; and Louis went, more slowly, to his own home.

He marvelled at Harry. No thought of this subject seemed to have occurred to him until he heard his friend speaking to Miss Cecil about it; but he had taken it up with a ready interest that surprised Louis, when he compared it with his own reluctance, and the slow growth of conviction of need and of duty in his mind.

"And yet," he reflected, "though he has but just thought of it, the way seems plainer to him than to me, and I do believe he is ever so much more ready to take it."

Louis did not understand that as there are soils in which the seed sown long lies dormant, but is ready to spring into life, and send up its tiny shoots of green, at almost the first ray of sunshine, or the first breath of the warm spring air, so there are hearts into which the seed of truth falls and lies, forgotten, as if dead, until some slight impulse from without wakes it into sudden and vigorous life.

Freda did not find Louis as entertaining a companion as usual that day. It was difficult for him to give his attention to the book which he read to her, or to her eager talk, though he tried to do both; and he was relieved when at last, rather earlier than usual, he found himself in his own room for the night, free to do as he would without observation.

He remembered Harry's parting words: "There's no doubt how we ought to decide it; and if we can't bring ourselves to do it, I believe God can, and we had better ask Him to help us."

The words seemed to strike him with a new force. They had sounded strangely, coming from Harry's lips; but could anything be more reasonable?

He knelt by his bedside and prayed most earnestly that God would help him to decide for him; to be willing to give up his own will, and loyally serve his King.

"I know I ought to do it," he said; "and thou knowest that I want to, but some way I can't! Something in my heart holds me back. Oh, God, help me! I know thou canst; and unless thou wilt help me, I never can do it!"

The feeling of his utter helplessness seemed to overwhelm him, and reliance upon the Strong One was his only hope.

A little later, he put out the light, and sat down by the window, in the moonlight, to "think it out," and make his decision in the way he had planned to do it.

But even as the angel flew to bring the answer to the prayer of Daniel, while the words were still upon his lips, telling him "from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard," so God had answered Louis while he

prayed, though he came but slowly to the consciousness of the fact.

One by one he took up the reasons for delay, which had seemed so strong to him in the afternoon, but in some strange way they had lost their force.

"It is a serious thing to pledge oneself in that way," he repeated; and the mental response came quickly, "How much more serious a thing it is not to do it!"

"It is for the whole of my life," he said; and his heart replied, "What a blessed thought that is! I am sure I don't want to keep any of my life back from Him. Once His, I shall be always His."

"But it is surrendering my own will, once for all. I shall have to give up my own way, continually;" and he answered sincerely, "What do I want with my own will, when His is so much better? I want to do just what He sets me about, in just the way that He shows me. What difference does it make what it is, when it is for Him? He knows best what He wants of me. How could I take my own way so long, and refuse to obey Him? Who else but He would ever forgive such treatment? How can I ever be grateful enough? I will never grieve Him again."

There was no question of decision in this "thinking it over," though he did not realize that the decision had really been made, the momentous step across the line of submission really taken,

when he confessed from the depths of his heart his own weakness, and fell back on God's strength.

But he did know that he had found a Friend, with whom it was pleasant to talk, and who was strong to help his weakness; and before he slept, he knelt again, to tell Him how sorry he was for the past, and to pledge himself anew to His service for the future.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
Stand in his strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you—
Ye dare not trust your own:
Put on the gospel armor,
And, watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there!"

—DUFFIELD.

IN the morning, Louis was impatient to see Harry, and he started for the Lawrence farm earlier than usual; but, early as it was, Harry was watching for him. Each looked eagerly at the other, and they spoke almost together.

"I have chosen Christ for my King, Harry!"

"I have found Jesus, Louis!"

And they rejoiced together over their new happiness. The very sky seemed to be brighter, and the sunlight more cheery, than they had ever known before.

Louis went for his hoe, and worked away at his potatoes with new zeal; and Harry sat on an upturned basket, and watched the stores that his busy hoe unearthed, while they talked.

"You don't know how much you helped me, Harry," Louis said, "by reminding me that God

would make me willing to yield my will to His. He did it, when I asked Him, and I can only wonder at myself for hesitating a minute about it. I am quite sure that I would ever so much rather have Him direct my life now, than to do it myself, and I mean to do just what He wants me to, as fast as I find out what it is, whether I like it or not."

"I am sure I'm very glad if I did help you," Harry said; "but I guess I only blundered into it, as I do into most things, for I was not thinking so much of you as of myself when I said it. And you don't know how much you helped me. Your speaking to Miss Cecil as you did, seemed to wake me up all of a sudden. Knowing that you wanted the Christian's armor made me see that I needed it too; and then what she said, showed me that I had really been marching under the other flag, when, if I had thought anything about it, I should have said that I was only a kind of a neutral."

"Well," Louis answered, "I say as you did, that I'm glad if I helped you; but it wasn't because I was trying to do it, for I was only thinking of myself. I believe it is time to stop being so selfish. As you said yesterday, such a thing ought not to be kept to oneself; and if it could, I can't keep it. I want to tell everybody. If we should tell the other boys that we have determined to follow Christ, don't you believe they would go with us? I do; and I mean to try. It is only because they don't know, or don't think about it, any more

than we did, that they are not Christians. Nobody could really think of it without knowing what his duty was, and then he would do it."

"I'm not so sure of that," Harry said, shaking his head over Louis' wild assertion. "One may know one's duty without doing it. I have proved that myself, many a time. But it does seem as if nobody could help loving Jesus, He is so good. I say, Louis, let's start for school a little bit earlier this morning, and then we shall have time to stop at Miss Cecil's for a minute. How glad she will be for us! I can't wait till night to tell her!"

So it happened that Miss Huntington, sitting at work on the veranda a little before school time, heard the click of the gate-latch, and looked up to see the two boys, of whom she was thinking at the moment, coming towards her. Their bright faces told their own tale. She dropped her work, and held out both hands to them.

"Ah," she said, "I don't think I need to ask how it is with you. I am sure you have seen my Captain since you left me yesterday, and have enlisted for the war."

"Yes," Louis said, "we have; and I hope we shall be good soldiers. I am sure we mean to be."

"That depends on yourselves, you know," she said. "God gives you the armor, but He leaves it to you to say whether you will let it rust on your hands, so that it loses its beauty and half its value, or whether you will keep it bright with

constant use. If you think it is enough to know that you have it, so that you can use it if a special occasion comes, and content yourselves with putting it on once in a while, you will find that it doesn't fit comfortably; you will not feel at ease in it; the weapons that you have, the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, and good old Bunyan's favorite, which he called All-prayer, will seem strange to you, and you will not be skilful in their use."

"It seems to be like everything else," Louis said. "The oftener we do a thing, the easier and better we can do it."

"Exactly," Miss Cecil returned; "so keep your armor bright. And now I want you to remember this: your Christian character will, in all probability, depend on the way you begin now; on what you do for the next few weeks. If you settle down into sponge Christians, taking in everything, and giving out nothing without a squeeze, you will be likely to stay sponges. If you begin by doing just as much for Christ as you can, you will find it so pleasant that you will be likely to keep on, and become active working Christians. So take care to begin right, my dear boys."

"That's what we want to do," said Harry. "But please tell us how. What shall we do? How shall we begin?"

"Keep your eyes open for the first bit of work that God gives you a chance to do," she answered,

smiling. "It will come before you know it, and you may not see it unless you are on the watch. It may be to set a good example in some little thing, or to say a word for Jesus, or to persuade some one else to serve Him. But don't be tempted to hide your flag under any circumstances. Ah, I see you think that is the last thing you would ever do, but you don't know what shape temptation may take. It never comes looking exactly as we expected it would. So stand by your colors, and be on the watch."

"If there was nothing harder than that to do! I don't feel as if I should ever want to hide them," Louis said. "I never was afraid yet to say what I believed, and I don't mean to begin now when I have just got hold of something worth telling. Think of being ashamed to have it known that one loves Christ, and means to serve Him! I suppose that is hiding the colors. Why, I want to tell everybody about it!"

"I am glad you do," she said. "Then perhaps you will have no trouble in that particular way. Your temptations may take some other shape. You know your own weak points better than I do. Only remember that you can do nothing in your own strength. So surely as you try it, you will fail."

"But we have the strength of God back of ours, and He has promised to help us," Louis said in a glad tone; "I have tried it, and He did help me."

"And He always will, if you ask for help," she replied. "But the strength He gives us is like the manna of the Israelites, something that can't be laid up in store. We have to ask for it, as we do for our daily bread, day by day."

"Then what we have to do," Louis said, summing up, "is to 'Stand up for Jesus,' as the hymn says, and ask for God's help to do it. We'll try, Miss Cecil. Come, Harry; we shall have to run, or we shall be late, and that will be a bad beginning."

They had heard the school bell ringing, but had lingered to the last possible moment. But a sharp run brought them to the school-house just in time, and they took their seats, hot and breathless.

It proved to be rather a hard day for both of them. They found it difficult to fix their thoughts on their studies: before they were aware, they would wander off to other things, and Miss Rawson wondered what could have happened to two of her best scholars, to make them so unlike themselves. Louis failed in his arithmetic lesson, for the first time that term, much to his annoyance, and Harry was reprimanded for inattention.

When Louis returned to his seat, he threw his arithmetic impatiently down on his desk, in manifest ill humor. But, glancing at him a little later, Harry saw him intent upon his slate, and working as busily as if he had not a thought beyond the figures upon it. He wondered at it, and when they met at recess, he said: —

"I don't see how you can study to-day, Louis; I'm sure I can't. My mind is full of other things."

"I thought I couldn't at first," said Louis. "Then I remembered Miss Cecil's warning us that we couldn't tell what shape temptation would take, and I wondered whether this might not be a temptation, for you know it does seem to be my plain duty just now to study, so I set myself about it. It seemed a queer thing to do to ask Jesus to help me not to think of Him, but to put my mind on that lesson. But that is what I did, and He did help me."

"I didn't think of it in that way," Harry said; "but I guess you were right, and I mean to study after recess."

"Well, I don't see why we shouldn't carry our religion into school duties as well as into any others; do you?" Louis said. "I am sure it ought to make us better scholars, instead of worse ones, and I think that demerit mark I got this morning was a poor way to begin."

Mrs. Thorne went about her work that day with sunshine in her heart, and a song upon her lips.

She had had trouble enough in her life, but Louis had never given her any cause for anxiety on his account. Frank and merry, obedient and helpful, he had been a great comfort to her in all her trouble. The very sight of his blithe face, or the sound of his cheery voice, had often seemed to lift the weight from her heart. As long as she

could keep him with her, she could not count herself wholly unhappy. And now, the only thing that seemed, to her partial eyes, to be lacking in him, was supplied.

Early as it was, before going to his work that morning, he had wakened her with a kiss, and knelt by the side of her bed to tell her that he had asked her Saviour to be his, and he wanted her to pray for him, that he might be a faithful servant to Him.

Freda had awakened at the sound of their voices, and rubbed her sleepy eyes, while she wondered why her mother was crying, and yet saying that she was so glad.

"When I'm glad," she remarked, "I don't cry!"

Louis went to his work, and his mother dried her eyes, and tried to explain to Freda; but the only result was that the child looked at her brother, the next time she saw him, with mingled curiosity and awe, as if she expected to see some great change in him, and was much relieved when she found him just as ready to talk and laugh with her as he was before.

But the mother had a song in her heart all day long. She felt the gladness which only a mother can feel, when she sees her children coming to Christ, and the prayer which she had daily offered for him through so many years was changed to thanksgiving.

"We must not forget that this is the night for

the meeting, Harry," Louis said, as they walked home from school, a day or two later.

"Can't forget a thing I never knew," Harry returned. "What meeting do you mean?"

"The church prayer-meeting, of course," said Louis. "What did you think I meant?"

"I didn't know," said Harry. "That's the reason I asked. How came you to know anything about it?"

"Why, it is the usual church prayer-meeting," Louis replied. "It comes every week, Thursday night. Besides, where are your ears? Didn't you hear Mr. Russell give notice of it Sunday? He gives it every week, as regularly as he preaches his sermon."

"Then I suppose I have heard it," said Harry. "But it must have been with the ears of my head, and not of my mind, for it strikes me now as something new. I never pay much attention to the notices, for they don't often concern me."

"This one concerns us," Louis rejoined; "for I am going to the meeting to-night, and I suppose you are."

"Why," said Harry, "do boys go there?"

"I don't know; I never thought to ask," Louis answered; "but there will be two there to-night, if you and I go. We can keep each other in countenance. We are going to try to 'begin right,' you know, and Christians go to this meeting. It's on purpose for them, and I suppose they go to compare notes, and help each other along. I have

often heard my mother say that she was sorry she couldn't go. So if it is for Christians, we want to be there now, if we are going to stand by the flag."

"All right, then," said Harry.

Louis evidently supposed that all Christians went to their church prayer-meeting as a matter of course. It was not an unreasonable idea, but he grew wiser in time.

When the two boys presented themselves at the vestry of the West Church that night, their entrance caused quite a sensation. Boys at that meeting were a strange sight, and at the sound of their quick footsteps on the uncarpeted aisle, so unlike the slow, heavy tread that was usually heard there, every one turned to see who was coming in.

"Why, it's Louis Thorne and Harry Lawrence! What's going to happen next?" one good woman whispered, almost aloud, to her neighbor. "What freak do you suppose sent them here?"

"I don't know," said her friend. "I only hope they will behave themselves!"

It appeared as if they intended to do that, for they sat down quietly, quite unconscious of the stir they had made.

Though Mr. Russell was already in his desk, turning the leaves of his hymn-book, they thought they must have mistaken the hour, and had come too early, for there were scarcely twenty in the room, which would have seated two hundred, and

even these few were not sitting together, but were scattered about, here and there, in the great empty room, seeming to occupy, by preference, the seats near the door.

Mr. Russell looked lonely, sitting by himself at the other end of the room, and perhaps he felt so, for before beginning the services, he requested all present to come up and take seats near the desk. But from the manner in which the request was received, it was evidently not the first time it had been made, and only a few complied with it.

Among them were our two boys, who were welcomed by a smile from Miss Cecil across the aisle, and a friendly nod from Dr. Gardiner, beside whom they found themselves seated, and both a nod and a smile from Mr. Russell, whose face lighted up when he saw them.

The meeting went on as meetings under such circumstances generally do. Mr. Russell did his best to give it interest, but the rows of vacant seats before him seemed to chill his warmth, before it could reach the distant auditors. It is possible that he found it easier to talk, when he was lying on his back, on the battle-field.

The boys enjoyed Dr. Gardiner's brief and pointed remarks, and the singing, in which they joined heartily, seemed to be the redeeming feature of the evening. It could not fail to be good, with two such voices as Miss Huntington's and Dr. Gardiner's leading it, and covering all defects

But Louis and Harry, with their hearts full of their new-found love, looked at each other with dismay, as the time passed on, and long exhortations, in which neither the speaker nor any one else seemed much interested, were followed by equally long formal prayers. It had a chilling effect upon them. Could it be possible, they thought, that the time would ever come when they would speak as coldly and indifferently of religious things, as some of these good brethren did, who even began their remarks by avowing that they had nothing in particular to say, and only spoke to fill up the time, rather than to see it wasted!

There came another pause; there seemed to be always an interval of silence after each speaker finished, as if to give time for reflection upon what had been said.

This was a longer pause than usual, and Louis saw Miss Huntington looking over at him with a meaning in her glance, which he read perhaps the sooner that it seconded his own impulse. In the next instant he was on his feet, telling of the dear Saviour he had found, and avowing his purpose to serve Him.

He had no thought of fear when he rose; he was not a timid boy; his heart was burning within him, and it seemed the most natural thing to do to tell his joy to those who had felt the same, and could sympathize with him. But when he actually heard himself speaking in the hushed silence,

and saw the listening faces turned toward him, a kind of stage fright seized him.

His voice trembled and faltered, and he could hardly finish his sentence. He was so confused that he would have stammered on, hardly knowing what he was saying; but scarcely was the last word of the broken sentence uttered, when Dr. Gardiner's hand drew him down to his seat again, and Miss Huntington's voice began Doddridge's hymn: —

> "Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice
> On Thee, my Saviour, and my God!
> Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
> And tell its raptures all abroad."

While they were singing, Louis had time to recover from his confusion, and to feel glad that, though he had not been able to say much, he had yet taken a public stand for Christ.

Then one of the same good brothers, whom he had mentally been accusing of coldness, rose and offered a most fervent prayer of thanksgiving, which seemed to go straight up to the throne of God. It went to Louis' heart, and he registered a vow, then and there, that he would never again be so hasty in harsh judgment of any one.

The boys found that there was warmth enough of Christian feeling in these people whom they had thought so cold-hearted, only it smouldered unseen, like a fire covered up with ashes. After the meeting was dismissed, one after another

came up to welcome them as brothers, to give a warm grasp of the hand, and to bring their congratulations and good wishes. Mr. Russell was one of the first to greet them, and was evidently very much moved.

"Oh, boys!" he said, while his eyes filled with tears. "If you could only get my Willie to join you!"

"I wish he would," Louis answered. "Perhaps Miss Cecil will persuade him," he said, looking at her.

"Try yourself, Louis," Miss Cecil said. "A boy can sometimes influence his mates, when older friends would utterly fail. There's a kind of free-masonry of youth among you."

"I'll do my best," Louis said modestly. "I can pray for him, if I can't do anything more. But I have more faith in your words reaching him, than in anything that I could say."

"I have no faith in either," she said. "Let us put our faith in God. Remember what the Scripture says: 'Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.' Since we can't tell what means He will bless, let us use them all."

"I did wish I could find courage to do as you did to-night," Harry said, as the boys went home.

"Well, I don't think I had much," Louis said. "As you saw, I hadn't enough to last through two minutes. I was something like Peter, when he

thought he could walk on the water. I know how he felt when he found himself going down!"

"But he didn't go down," said Harry. "And the others didn't even try. *I* know how they felt!"

"I wasn't afraid when I got up," Louis continued. "I did not think of anything except that I wanted to tell them that we had found their Saviour; but when I found myself actually speaking, my heart jumped into my mouth. I'm sure I don't know what I should have done, if Dr. Gardiner had not given me a gentle hint that it was possible to come to an end right there, and sit down. I confess that I did feel terribly mortified for a little while; but after all, I wasn't trying to make a speech, and I don't care now. I feel as if Jesus knew just how it was, and saw that I was really trying to speak for Him. I can almost hear Him say, 'Never mind; try again!' And that's what I mean to do. I feel pretty sure that I shall not be so frightened next time."

"Of course you won't," Harry said. "Perhaps that was one of the things Miss Cecil meant when she said we should need practice to know how to use our weapons. I wish I had tried when you did, but it did seem impossible. I know I couldn't have said three words. But I really don't think I was trying to hide the flag; do you?"

"Not at all," Louis answered promptly. "That isn't the kind of place, I imagine, where one would be tempted to do that. Everybody was in sym-

pathy with us there. Only think how kind they were after meeting, all coming to shake hands with us, and say how glad they were for us! It would have taken a good deal more courage to stand up in such a meeting, and say we were not Christians, and never meant to be."

"That's true enough," said Harry.

"But I think the real time when the temptation to hide the flag will come, will be when we are with people who don't care anything about relig ion. Then we shall have to be on our guard. As for your silence to-night, I dare say half of what kept you still, was seeing how frightened I got; so that was partly my fault. But we both will do better next week, because, if we are going to 'Stand up for Jesus,' we must 'begin right,' as Miss Cecil said."

CHAPTER IX.

"The mistakes of my life have been many,
The sins of my heart have been more;
And I scarce can see for weeping,
But I'll knock at the open door."

— URANIA LOCKE BAILEY.

THE report of the prayer-meeting rapidly spread among the schoolboys, and when Louis and Harry came to school the next morning, they looked at them in much the same way as Freda did; only, seeing no visible change in them, they soon decided that there was no change. What they expected to see, it would be difficult to say.

One or two of the better informed among them, who knew what the change was supposed to be, pursued their investigations a little further; and though that was the last thing they intended, it gave the two friends just the opportunity they wanted to "show their colors."

"I hear you spoke in the church meeting last night, Louis," Charlie Ray said, taking a moment when the other boys chanced to be busy elsewhere. "That so?"

"I tried to," Louis said; "I didn't succeed very well, as I dare say you know, but still I did manage

to get out the main thing that I wanted to say; and I hope I shall do better next time."

Charlie was a little taken back by Louis' readiness to talk of the attempt at speaking, of which he had fancied he would be a little ashamed, and by the quiet assumption that his inquiry was dictated by a friendly interest. He tried again.

"Oh, yes; you'll probably get to be a great orator before we know it! You're both going to join the church for the next thing, I suppose."

"Yes; we hope to," Harry said. "Not just at present, but before very long."

"Then, I dare say you think you are a great deal better than the rest of us, now?" Charlie continued.

"Not a bit of it," said Louis. "That's a mistake of yours. Do you think I have any less common sense than I had before, so that I could take up that ridiculous notion?"

"I don't know about its being ridiculous," Charlie said. "Christians are generally supposed to be better than other people. I thought you had changed yourself into Miss Cecil's ideal knight at one jump. But," seeing him laugh, "perhaps you are not much of a Christian, after all?"

"Just as much of one as I can be," Louis said promptly. "I hope to be a better one as I go on. I've only just begun the Christian life yet, you know; but I mean Christ shall have all there is of me to have. Harry will tell you the same."

"Just exactly," Harry said, with emphasis.

"And as for being better than other people," Louis went on, "I've got far enough to know that Christians are sinners still, — one doesn't have to get far to find that out, — only they are forgiven sinners, and that makes a wonderful difference. I wish you would try it for yourself, Charlie! I can't tell you how happy it makes me. Won't you try to begin the Christian life with us?"

Charlie was so surprised at finding all his sneering remarks taken literally, and so annoyed by Louis' personal appeal, which he certainly did not expect, considering the turn he had given to the conversation, that he was not prepared with a reply. He muttered something that sounded like, "I wish you wouldn't bother me," and retreated to the other end of the playground.

A message from Miss Rawson called Harry away just then, and Louis remained alone, looking after Charlie. He felt both surprised and disappointed, and began to consider what he could have said to ruffle Charlie's usually sweet temper. It never occurred to him to put himself in Charlie's place, or to think how Louis Thorne would have received such an appeal a month ago. A pupil in the school of Experience learns slowly.

While Louis was thinking of it, Willie Russell came up.

"The boys all seem afraid of you to-day," he said. "I hear that you are running an opposition line against my father."

"Why, no, indeed," said Louis. "You know better. I'm going along with him; and I should be glad to push behind his coach, or get a stone out of his road!"

"I should like to have heard you preaching away in that meeting, last night!" Willie said, disregarding the answer.

"I didn't know it was preaching," Louis rejoined. "If it was, it had one good thing about it. It was shorter than any sermon you ever heard."

"Oh, I know what you said, every word of it," Willie said. "I had a full account of it, from two or three people, with a moral thrown in, free *gratis*. Everybody in town knows of it by this time, I should say."

"I've no objection," Louis replied. "I didn't want it to be a secret, or suppose it was going to be one. You would say, yourself, that a fellow who wouldn't show his colors was good for nothing. When you are a Christian, you will want people to know it."

A kind of inarticulate sound answered this last statement.

"Come, suppose you go to meeting with us next week," Louis proposed.

"Suppose I don't do any such thing," Willie returned. "I get quite enough of the real article, Sundays."

"Well, then," Louis said, "you know I don't

want to preach to you, which is lucky for both of us; for you wouldn't like it, and I don't know how, and shouldn't care to begin practising on a minister's son! But will you let me talk to you a minute?"

"Depends on what you say," Willie replied. "I believe people generally talk without asking if they may, unless they have something very disagreeable to say. If you have, I give you fair notice that I'm not in the mood to hear it."

So Louis took another lesson from Experience. He saw his blunder, and recorded a mental determination never to ask leave to talk about religion again.

"I'll just go ahead," he said to himself, "and talk about it exactly as I would about anything else, the next chance I have, without being so formal as to ask leave. It is only telling a fellow to be on his guard and lock the door."

Aloud, he said, "This ought not to be disagreeable. I was only going to say just what you have heard Miss Cecil say, that I wish you were a Christian. I suppose you wish it yourself."

"Much obliged to you," Willie said indifferently. "But I think you must have queer ideas of what is disagreeable! Can't you find something else now to talk about, just for a change?"

"Not just now," Louis said; "because I want you to do this so much. You know you ought to. You'll think about it, at any rate, won't you, Willie?"

"Not if I can help it," Willie said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "There are plenty of pleasanter things about. And if you'll take a friend's advice, you won't go preaching to every fellow you can get hold of, or we shall all be dodging you as if you were a mad dog, before the week is out! Don't you mean ever to think of anything else? Do Christians ever do such a thing as to play ball, or is it wicked? Because we mean to have a game before the bell rings. You'll play, won't you?"

"Yes," Louis said, hesitating a little.

"That's a good fellow!" Willie said.

He rushed off to collect the other players, and Louis stood waiting.

He was very much disappointed. He had been so certain that the boys would respond to the first appeal; and now two of them, the very two of whom he felt most sure, had refused to listen. It was so unexpected that he did not know what to think, and his faith began to waver.

He felt very little inclination for the game he had promised to play, though he was generally the first to propose playing; but a vague idea was floating in his mind, brought there by Willie's last words, that he ought to show him that a Christian could enjoy fun as much as any one else, and that trying to follow Christ by no means took all the pleasure out of life.

He looked round for Harry, but he was not there. Miss Rawson had sent him on an errand.

A large field adjoining the school grounds had been kindly lent by the owner as a ball ground, and the boys were gathering there.

For the first time in his life Louis began playing almost unwillingly, and as a duty. But that did not last long. He always threw himself heartily into what he was doing, and before many minutes had passed he was absorbed in the interest of the game, and was running and shouting and cheering as eagerly as any of the others. It was good to see how thoroughly he entered into the spirit of the thing. He was one of the best players on the ground, and was proud of his skill, but he seemed bent on outdoing himself to-day.

He had just made a brilliant run, which brought the applause even of his opponents; "doing the impossible," Willie Russell called it; when suddenly — he could never remember exactly how it happened — a serious misunderstanding arose among the players, and cries of unfair play were heard, followed by a hot dispute. The umpire tried to satisfy both sides, and satisfied neither. The advantage Louis had gained with such effort was in danger of being lost, and lost, as it seemed to him, very unfairly.

As he had once confessed to Harry, he "liked to have his own way," and he had a quick temper. It blazed up now. Forgetting everything else, he threw himself into the fray.

There was a tumult of furious accusations and

angry contradictions, and from some of the rougher boys shocking oaths were heard. All of them were heated and excited with the game, and soon words failed to express their feelings forcibly enough.

Louis himself, in a transport of rage, gave the first blow. It was like touching a match to powder. The blow was instantly returned with interest, and it was hardly a minute before both sides were engaged in a savage fight.

The noise attracted the attention of those remaining in the playground. There was a general rush to the fence, where they could see to the best advantage ; but one of the younger scholars ran in breathless haste to Miss Rawson, and told her what was going on.

She went to a window overlooking the ball ground, gave one glance at the swarm of angry boys, who were in the middle of their contest, and seemed to her to be proceeding on the Kilkenny Irishman's rule for a fight, "When you see a head, hit it! It's somebody's!" and rang her bell imperatively.

The habit of obedience to its summons prevailed. Slowly and reluctantly the combatants released each other, and returned to the schoolroom, muttering threats of future vengeance by the way. Miss Rawson met them with a sharp rebuke, and forbade any more use of the ball ground for a week, "by which time I hope you will be able to play like gentlemen, and not like rowdies," she finished, severely.

Louis was as angry and as excited as any of them. There would be no opportunity of expressing his feelings in words until school should be dismissed, but he thought of the various cutting things he would say then; and he scowled fiercely at Sam Johnson, who was the leading spirit of the other side; and having a chance, in passing his desk on his way to a recitation, to administer a sly kick to him, he did it with a will, and only laughed at the clenched fist which, unseen by Miss Rawson, was shaken threateningly at him.

Harry looked at him in the utmost surprise, but Louis returned only a defiant glance. If any one had reproved him then, he would have said indignantly, "I do well to be angry."

But a little thing brought him to his senses. He happened to look up just in time to see Willie Russell look significantly at him, and then exchange a meaning smile with Charlie Ray. Both look and smile said as plainly as words, "This is the Christian, who goes to prayer-meetings and lectures us!"

A flood of crimson rushed over Louis' face, as he saw and interpreted their silent comment, and his eyes fell. All at once he came to a realizing sense of what he had done. His head dropped on his desk; it seemed to him that he could never lift it again; and his heart dropped lower still.

It did not mend the matter that Willie and Charlie had been among the foremost in the fray

and had cheered him on. They had made no profession of meaning to do better, and he had. They had a right to expect different things from him. He did not even think twice of their share in the quarrel, but his own overwhelmed him.

Such a little while ago he had said that he only wanted to know what the Lord wished him to do, and he would do it! Such a little while ago he had vowed to devote his life to His service! Was this the way he kept his word?

And he might have known better, too. Had not Miss Cecil told him that temptation would be sure to come in a shape that he did not expect? She had given him fair warning. Had he not himself wisely told Harry that the danger was greater in other places than in a prayer-meeting? He had been so sure that he should be on his guard against everything that looked at all suspicious; and now the enemy had taken him unawares, and defeated him at the first attack, without his striking a blow in his own defence, or even recognizing that the foe was near, until he was bound hand and foot. He began to have a much greater respect for Satan's abilities than he had ever had before.

"If it is going to be like this, I shall never know what he is going to do, or where he will spring up next," he thought dolefully. "I was on the watch for him when I was talking with the boys, but playing ball seemed an innocent thing

enough, and I never thought of temptation taking that shape. But now, I never can be sure of myself after this. I have broken my promise to Jesus so soon, and I did mean to keep it. It is the very first time that I have been tried, too; the first chance I have had to show that I meant to be a different boy; and I thought of nothing but doing my own will, when I did believe that I wanted to do God's will!"

These thoughts rushed through his mind so rapidly that he could hardly separate them. He was in great trouble, but, at least, he knew where to go for comfort, and a most earnest prayer rose from his heart. The buzz of the schoolroom was all about him, but it seemed to him that he was alone with God.

"Oh, dear Saviour," he said, "I have done very wrong, but, indeed, I am sorry. Do forgive me. Don't let it make any of the boys think that there is no use in trying to be a Christian. Help me to watch, that I may be ready the next time I am tempted, and, oh, don't let me sin so against Thee again!"

He seemed to hear the answer of the forgiving Saviour, and presently he could lift his head again from his desk.

But after the tempest and the calm, he did not find it easy to fix his thoughts upon his books, and he had a great longing to tell the whole to Miss Cecil. He went to Miss Rawson and asked to be

excused from school for the rest of the forenoon. He gave no reason for his request, but she had seen his troubled face, and could guess at the reason. At any rate, she trusted him; and the next moment he was out of doors, and on his way to Miss Cecil.

He found her alone, as he had hoped, and he poured out the whole story to her, with all his repentance and self-reproach. He softened nothing in the history of his wrong-doing. Indeed, it seemed worse to him when he came to put the account in audible speech for another's ears, than it had done when he was going over it in his own mind, and he could not try to excuse what he felt was inexcusable.

Miss Cecil listened very gravely.

"Oh, Louis, I am very sorry!" she said.

"So am I," he said most sincerely; "but what can I do now?"

"The first thing must be to ask God's forgiveness," she suggested.

"Why, of course," he said. "It was the first thing I thought of when I came to myself. How could I help it? But how He could forgive such — so soon after I had promised — " and there he stopped.

"Did you think He would not?" she asked, wondering if he had lost his trust in God's forgiving love.

"No, indeed; I am sure He has forgiven me,"

Louis said; "but I can't forgive myself, and oh, Miss Cecil, I feel so ashamed! I wanted to hide my face whenever I saw any one, when I was coming here. Willie Russell said that everybody in town knew what I said last night, and I was glad then to think they did. I liked to have it known that I was on the Lord's side. It seemed to be a badge of honor. But I feel now as if I had denied Him. I can't look anybody in the face, for they must all know it by night. To be able to hold out only one day, when you were all so kind to me last night, and to fail at the very first trial, — oh, I am ashamed!"

"My dear Louis," Miss Cecil said, "didn't you expect the Christian life to be a warfare? Did you suppose you had won the victory once for all? This is what it means, to fight against just such things as your temper, and to be defeated whenever we neglect to ask the Strong One for strength. The temptation came to you suddenly, but your prayer for help could have gone as quickly. As to the rest of your trouble, all of us have been through an experience enough like yours to enable us to sympathize with you."

Louis looked as if the last statement was a little too much to be credited.

"At any rate," he said, in the tone of one taking a resolution, "I won't play ball any more! I might do just the same thing again. It is only running into danger."

"Not at all." Miss Cecil answered, repressing a smile. "That would be refusing to face danger, like a coward. I hope you will play many a good game, and show that you can play as a Christian should. You are not told to run out of the world; only to be 'in it, but not of it.' Now, don't spend any more time in mourning over your fall, but just take it as a warning to be ready for the next battle. 'Out of the nettle of danger, you may pluck the flower of safety.' After this you will be more likely to be on the watch for Satan's next attack, and will not be caught so easily."

"Ah, if he would only fight fair!" Louis said, with a look more like his own. "If he would only give notice when he was going to begin, and not sneak in when nobody is thinking of him, and in some shape that nobody could suspect, and have a fellow down before he knows what is happening to him!"

Miss Cecil laughed heartily.

"In fact," she said, "if he would step up to you frankly, and say, 'If you please, I am Satan, and I would be very glad to have you do so and so,' you think you would be able to refuse?"

Louis nodded.

"I've no doubt that you would," she said. "Neither has he, and so you may be very sure that you will never find him so accommodating as to introduce himself under his true name. He is too shrewd for that, and always goes under an

alias. No one would listen to him if he came in his own shape; but when he wears the dress of an angel of light, he can deceive the very elect, we are told."

"I should suppose he ought to know how, by this time," Louis said, "if experience would teach him."

"And he does," said Miss Cecil, "as many a repentant Christian can witness. This is no tournament, Louis. It is real war. In the lists, a knight cares chiefly for displaying his grace and skill; he fights strictly according to rules; he is careful to take no undue or unchivalric advantage of his opponent. But when the real battle comes, it is a matter of life or death. He thinks no longer of grace, or of the rules of carpet combat; he takes every advantage he can get: you must remember that, like him, you are fighting for life, and you have a most unscrupulous foe. You cannot be too much on your guard. I hope this defeat of to-day will be your 'Bull Run,' and teach you, in your fight, the lesson that battle taught our people in theirs. You may be thankful for it yet. Perhaps it was allowed to show you your own weakness."

"But even then, though that might help me, it won't cure the mischief I have done," Louis said, going back to his first trouble. "If I had any chance of winning any of the boys to Christ, I have lost it, and all by my own fault. They know

what I did, and they would laugh at me if I should speak of religion again. They must think I don't know anything about it; and the worst of it is, that I've given them the right to think so."

If Louis could have read the thoughts of the boys at that moment, he might have been somewhat comforted. Both Charlie and Willie were very well aware that he had seen the significant glance they interchanged, and had read its meaning, and they were quite willing that he should know what they thought. But they had also noticed the sudden change which passed over his face, and saw his head go down upon his desk, and stay there, and they interpreted his feelings on the whole very accurately.

"He took it pretty hard," Willie said, when they talked it over after school. "He has got a temper of his own, we all know, and I dare say it got the upper hand of him before he knew it. There wasn't much time to meditate, before we were all in the scrimmage. He didn't cool off enough to think of it, till he caught us looking at each other. I suppose he was repenting when his head went down that way. Who ever saw him do such a thing before? Shows he is changed by something, doesn't it?"

Charlie nodded an assent.

"He's got the real thing, I believe," he said, "and I'm glad of it, only I don't fancy having him exhorting me. I'm glad I can show a little spirit,

without having to put on sackcloth and ashes for it afterwards. And I don't care if I was in a rage. Anybody would be. I say we served those fellows just right. It was good to see the way Louis walked into them. I only wish I could have hit harder! But I did my best, and that's all anybody can do."

Louis knew nothing of their judgment of him, and thought only of the judgment he deserved.

Miss Cecil could not say that his young critics would look at his fault as forgivingly as those Christians would who knew how easy it was to slip, or deny that he might find it brought up against him on occasion. He must take that as a part of his punishment, she said, and bear it patiently; but she comforted him, and encouraged him to hope that good might grow out of the evil, and that the war need not be a failure because the first battle was lost.

He left her, feeling much less confidence in himself than he did in the morning, but he was by no means so completely discouraged as he was when he went to her.

Nevertheless, it was a very sober face and a heavy heart that he carried back to school in the afternoon. The duty before him was not a pleasant one, and he dreaded it exceedingly, though he was determined to do it.

Sam Johnson met his approach with a scowl. He received his apologies for his anger, and for the kick he had given him, with no little surprise,

but very ungraciously, and he made it plain that he would have much preferred to make payment in kind, but he said at last, sulkily: —

"Well, I suppose a fellow can't do any more than to say he is sorry; but you had better take care not to do that thing again, for you won't get off so easy, next time, I can tell you!"

"I mean to take care," Louis said, controlling himself with difficulty, Sam's words and manner were so provoking; "I had no business to do it."

Sam responded with a kind of grunt, and a muttered, "You told the truth that time, anyway!"

Then Louis went in search of Charlie Ray and Willie Russell, who seemed bent on avoiding him. He had great difficulty in getting a chance to speak to them, they kept themselves so busy with the other boys; and when by perseverance he did succeed, they would not hear him through. Perhaps they were afraid that he would close with a practical application, though nothing was further from his thoughts. He was too thoroughly convinced that no words of his could do any good, until the morning's work was forgotten or atoned for.

"There! there!" Willie interrupted when he began to say how sorry he was. "I guess you have eaten humble pie enough for this time. It isn't my favorite dish, and I can't imagine anybody relishing it very much. We knew well enough that you were sorry for the whole thing, as soon

as you cooled off a little; didn't we, Charlie? You wouldn't have tripped if you had had a minute to think. Don't worry yourself about it any more."

"I'm afraid you will think my religion isn't worth very much," Louis ventured to say, with humility; "but it wasn't the fault of the religion. It was all my fault for forgetting it, and I'm very sorry for it."

"Well, yours is worth as much as anybody's, I guess," Charlie returned, with a wish to comfort him, he looked so troubled. "None of the Christians that I happen to know are perfect, but I guess they are Christians just the same. You can't expect to change into a saint all at once! I don't say it was right for you; but don't fret over it any more, old fellow; everybody will forget it by to-morrow."

Louis had not such confidence in the poor memories of his companions. He could only hope that they would be as charitable as Charlie and Willie were, and promise himself that he would not forget what had happened, nor the lesson he hoped he had learned from it.

He took Miss Cecil's advice, and did not give up his favorite game, as his first impulse had prompted. Willie watched him curiously at first; but he soon saw that the danger of another outbreak was small.

Louis played as well and as eagerly as ever, but it was easy to see that he set a double guard upon

his temper when he was playing, and that he bit off many an angry word before it had fairly passed his lips. His daily prayer was, "Lord, help me to take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."

There was not a boy in school who did not notice the change in him, as the days went on; and the steady effort he made to control his temper, which none of them failed to see, had perhaps quite as much effect upon them, as the personal appeals, which he no longer dared to make, would have had.

"I can't see why you should let that slip silence you in this way," Harry said one day. "Did you expect to persuade the boys on the ground of the good example you were showing them?"

"Why, no indeed," Louis said. "You know I couldn't. But if I should speak to them now, they would have a right to say, 'Physician, heal thyself,' and what could I say? I feel as if I must prove to them that Christ does help me to conquer this besetting sin of mine, before I dare ask them to let Him help them."

"That's making the Master's errand wait until you get yourself into satisfactory shape," said Harry. "It can't be right; I believe it is another of those temptations of Satan. The thing looks fair enough, but I believe he is behind it!"

CHAPTER X.

"I see not a step before me, yet I journey without a fear;
The Past is still in God's keeping, the Future His mercy will clear;
And what looks dark in the distance, may brighten as I draw near."

THE vacation was coming, and Louis was pleasing himself with the prospect of increased earnings, when he could have the whole day for work.

He had enjoyed his studies, and knew that his rank in school was good. He had begun to see the wisdom of his mother's determination to give him as much opportunity for study as she could, and he had improved his time, not only because it was a duty, and because he was grateful to her for keeping him at school, but also because he liked to learn. Study had become pleasant for its own sake.

Still, he was glad of the approaching vacation, because money was so much needed in their little household, and he could earn so little in the mornings and evenings. The rent was nearly due, and every cent that could be saved had to be laid aside for that; while the doctor's bill for the care of

Freda, the amount of which they could not even guess, was a terror to them.

Neither Louis nor his mother could tell how they were to manage through the winter; but Mrs. Thorne refused to worry about it beforehand, and said that when the time came, she was sure some way would be provided for them; and Louis tried to share her faith.

> It may not be my way,
> It may not be thy way;
> But yet in his own way
> The Lord will provide.

And a way was provided; but like many of God's ways, it was not the one that they would have chosen, and they did not recognize it as His choice for them, or take it until they had exhausted every means of finding some other. Many a blessing comes in disguise, and they mistook this one for a trial.

Louis went home one night, and found his mother in great perplexity.

A little thing — the first that caught his eye — showed how much she was troubled; she was actually sitting still, with her hands lying idly in her lap, which was an almost unheard-of thing. Freda was crying, too, though it was more from sympathy than anything else; for she was happy in the firm belief that her mother and Louis could find a way out of every trouble, and by some means set right everything that might go wrong.

"What's the matter, mother?" Louis said hastily, as soon as he saw her face. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes, indeed, and something that we never thought of," she said. "Mr. Johnson came here an hour ago to get the rent. I gave him what we had towards it, and I told him we would bring him the rest just as soon as we could get it."

"Well, so we will," said Louis. "That ought to satisfy him. I suppose he gives us credit for being honest, if we are poor, and knows he will get his pay in time. It won't be very long either."

"Oh, he was very kind about it," Mrs. Thorne said. "He told me to take my own time for paying the rest, and to let it be until I could pay it easily. He said he had heard about the stopping of the straw work, and knew we must find it hard to get along, and he was in no hurry for his money."

"Well, I'm sure that was kind of him," said Louis, looking puzzled. "What more could he say, or what more could you want? Of course we expected him to call for the rent, and we knew we hadn't got quite all of it ready for him, so that was nothing new. And since he was so kind about it, I don't see why you should be looking so sad, as if something dreadful had happened, or why Freda, there, was crying like a watering-pot, when I came in."

"Because that isn't all," his mother answered.

"You haven't heard the worst of it. Mr. Johnson says he has sold the house, and the new owner wants to take possession of it in a month, at farthest, and would be glad to have it as much sooner as we can manage to leave it."

"Sold our house!" Louis repeated, in dismay. "Could he do that, if we paid all the rent?" he asked, catching at the first straw.

"Why, yes, child, of course he could," his mother said. "Why should that hinder him? The place was already sold when he came for the rent."

Louis looked round the room, as if he expected to see the walls vanish before his eyes. Such a calamity seemed too great to be possible. He had never known any other home, and this little house, so plain and unattractive to other eyes, was very dear to him. He had never thought of leaving it. He could not imagine himself calling any other place home, any more than he could imagine other people living in those rooms, having their furniture there, and calling it their home, while he had no longer any right in it.

The whole thing seemed impossible. And what was to become of them? Where could they go? His thoughts were in a whirl.

Freda began to cry again, as she watched him. To see such a grave, perplexed look on his face was a new experience to her. The sound of her sobbing seemed to rouse him, and he shook himself, as if he wanted to awake from a bad dream.

"Something has got to be done," he said; "that's plain. What is it going to be, mother? Where can we go? Have you thought of anything?"

She shook her head sadly.

"No," she said presently; "I believe I have been feeling stunned ever since I heard it, and I have not been able to think of anything, or make any plans yet."

"Oh well," he said, trying to speak cheerfully, which was not a very easy thing to do, "there's lots of time; that seems to be the thing we are richest in. Lots of things may happen in a whole month. A good night's sleep over it will brighten up our ideas. Since we are turned out of this house, we have got to live in some other one; that's evident; and we can't make nests in a tree, like those big birds (would you like that, Freda?); so of course there must be a house for us somewhere, and perhaps in the morning we shall be able to think where it is. 'Somewhere' does sound like a pretty wide word to-night, but I guess it will narrow down a little before morning. Meantime, have you had your supper?"

"No, I haven't thought of it, and I couldn't eat," his mother said. She passed her hand wearily over her eyes.

"But Freda can," Louis rejoined; "and you will feel better after your cup of tea. Sit still, please; I'll get it for you. I wish I could have shared my supper with you; it would have put some strength into you."

He laid the little table; made toast and tea; and gently persuading his mother to eat and drink, soon had the pleasure of seeing her look a little more like herself, while Freda dried her tears, and applied herself to her supper.

"Who is it that has bought the house?" he asked presently.

"A man from Walton. No one we know," Mrs. Thorne said. "Mr. Johnson said he had a chance to sell the Green Farm. The house on it was burned down, you know, two or three years ago, and was never rebuilt. This man bought the farm on condition that he would sell this house with it."

"And that turns us out!" said Louis. "When I went to see that Green fire, I never thought of its having anything to do with us. Things do come round strangely! How convenient it would be," he added reflectively, "if we were like turtles, and carried our houses round on our backs! There would always be a roof over us then. I begin to have a sort of houseless, homeless, cast-away-on-a-desert-island sort of feeling already. What are you laughing at, Freda? I can tell you, it is very uncomfortable."

"Then we had better go to bed, and try to forget it for to-night," his mother said. "We'll think about it in the morning, as you said."

But the morning brought no light upon the question. They made inquiries, though with little hope or prospect of success; for an old inhabitant

of the town, like Mrs. Thorne, knew all the houses in the place which were rented to tenants, either wholly or in part. They were very few, — for nearly all the residents owned their homes, — but none of them would answer her purpose at all. She was completely at her wits' end. The days seemed to go by faster than ever days did before, and each brought the time nearer when she must go out of the house which had been her home so long, with no prospect of another to enter.

She began to wonder if they were to be reduced, in earnest, to Louis' jesting scheme of living in a wigwam or a tent until winter came. "He was certain that he could build the first," he said, "and he knew where he could borrow the second, and Freda might choose between them. It would be a very airy and healthy way of living, and with housework reduced to its lowest terms, as it would be there, there would be a good deal more time left for other work."

He was always ready now, in the little time that he was at home, with his cheery talk, trying to win a smile from his mother and sister; but when he was alone, his face was very grave. He tried to keep his faith in God's promise of protecting care to His children, and to believe that a way would open for them, though they saw no sign of it yet; but it was not easy to keep from doubt.

We have no difficulty in trusting God for daily bread, while our table is abundantly spread three

times a day; but when the flour-barrel is empty, and the pantry shelves are bare, and the last penny has gone, comes the test of our faith.

As if to prove the truth of the old sayings that "it never rains, but pours," and "misfortunes never come alone," another trouble came. Louis went one morning to carry the basket of nicely ironed clothes to Mr. Russell's house. But when he returned, and gave his mother the price of her work, which was always promptly paid, he gave with it a less welcome message: —

"That is the last, mother," he said. "Mrs. Russell told me to tell you that she finds she has overrated her strength, and is not able to get along without having help in the house. So she has engaged a girl, and will have her washing done at home now. She told me to say that she was very much disappointed, because she liked this way so much, and would be glad to continue it if she could. So that gold mine has given out!" he ended. "The bottom seems to be falling out of everything all at once. What do you suppose we are coming to?"

"I don't know," his mother said sadly. "I can't tell where to turn. I do believe there will be a way, but I can't see it yet. All I can do is to trust in God's care of us. You know Whittier says: —

"The steps of Faith
Fall on the seeming void, and find
The rock beneath."

"Well," Louis said; "I think I believe it — now and then! But I'm afraid to put my foot down on the void, without feeling round after the rock first! There's one sure comfort, that we are in God's hands. If we have to go to the poor-house, it will be because He sees that it is best. And if He has a way out for us, He will lead us to it."

For all the next week they looked in vain for the unknown way. The time grew very short. The little box, which served as the family treasury, was almost empty.

Yet they were sparing it in every possible way. Louis and his mother lived upon the very plainest food; indeed, they had nearly reached the oatmeal standard which Mrs. Thorne had once suggested as the last resort. The good substantial suppers which Mrs. Lawrence took care that Louis should have, were a boon to him now, for without them, the healthy, growing boy would often have gone to bed hungry.

Freda, too, needed more nourishing food; but her wants were supplied by the kindness of friends, who took a practical way of expressing their sympathy, and sent in all sorts of dainties for her.

Miss Huntington's Ulla came almost daily with her little covered basket, from which broth, or jellies, or something nice always appeared, to the almost equal pleasure of the two children. Freda grew into the way of watching for Ulla's coming,

and had many a merry time with her, making the most extraordinary guesses at the contents of the basket, and never guessing right, for it always held something new and unexpected, to tempt the child's capricious appetite.

The needs of the others would have been supplied as liberally, if they had been even suspected; but with true New England pride and reticence, the mother and son kept their privations to themselves.

Of course it was known that they probably found it difficult to make the two ends meet — Louis' dress alone would have told that story; but they did not ask for help; and so many of their neighbors were obliged to economize closely, and to deny themselves some of those comforts which seem almost like the necessities of life, but which still can be dispensed with, that no particular notice was taken of it, and not even Miss Huntington's capable Huldah guessed how narrow the margin was that separated them from absolute need.

She did know that they were poor, and she did what she could for them; but her means, as well as those of her young mistress, were cramped by their assuming the support of Ulla, in addition to their other charities, so that they could not do much.

Kindness and sympathy they could give, and they gave them freely. They were frequent visitors at the little house, and it would be hard to

tell whether Mrs. Thorne or her children looked forward most eagerly to their coming.

It is not the most needy that make the loudest calls for help; and a friendly helping hand extended to those who are still struggling to preserve their independence and self-respect, is often better than lavish charity bestowed upon those who have given up the struggle.

Only a few days remained before the new owner of the house would expect to find it vacated and ready for his use. Mrs. Thorne had scoured it from roof to cellar, until she could find nothing more to clean, and had begun to pack her goods for removal, though she did not know where they were going.

"But there will be a way," she repeated, "and we will be ready to take it, when we find it. I think we have done everything we can, and I believe God will do the rest."

"You are like the little girl Mr. Russell told us of last Sunday," Louis said. "There was a dreadfully dry time, and the people met to pray for rain, and she carried her big umbrella to church in the hot sunshine, so that she might be ready for the shower."

"Didn't it come?" Mrs. Thorne said, with a smile, looking up from her work.

"Come? Oh, yes," returned Louis; "according to Mr. Russell, it came in torrents, and she walked home rejoicing in her big umbrella, while all the

faithless people were drenched in the rain. But it won't take me long to get my umbrella; in other words, to pack up my numerous possessions. That is one blessing of having only a little, it is so easily taken care of."

He went off to his work, and his mother turned again to hers. She was still bending over the little old trunk in which she was packing her own and Freda's clothes, when Miss Cecil came to the door, and was greeted with a cry of joy from Freda. From her unfailing basket she produced a little cake, covered with smooth icing, on which, with a line of pink, was traced Freda's name, and placed it before the delighted child.

"Oh, thank you! Oh, look, mother!" she exclaimed. "I never saw anything so pretty. Only see my pink name!"

"Now you must relish that, Freda," Miss Cecil said merrily, "because it took so many to make it. It is a kind of combination cake. Huldah made it for you, and Ulla put the icing on; and I happened to be going through the kitchen as she finished, so I stopped and wrote your name on it. Now your part of the work is to eat it!"

"That's the best part of all!" Freda cried, in high glee; but Miss Cecil was not at all sure of it, when she saw the little girl's delight, and she remembered the words of Scripture, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"I shall keep it till Louis comes home," Freda

decided, putting it carefully on the little table beside her bed, where she could feast her eyes upon it. "I want him to see it just as it is, and then we can all eat it together."

"Here are some eggs for you, too," Miss Cecil said, taking out half a dozen large ones, three brown, and three white, which had filled the remaining space in her basket, and ranging them in a row on the table. "They will do you more good than the cake, and I think they are quite as pretty. Ulla said the hens laid them on purpose for you."

"Did she? How did she know?" Freda asked eagerly.

"Because they were such fine ones, I suppose," she answered. "She thought the hens would do their best for a little sick girl, who cannot run round as they do."

Then she left Freda to the contemplation of her treasures, and turned to Mrs. Thorne.

"I have something for you, too, to-day," she said brightly, "though I could not put it in my basket. It is only a bit of news."

Mrs. Thorne looked earnestly at her. She seemed to know by intuition to what the news referred.

"I am glad to find you packing up," Miss Cecil continued; "for I think we have discovered a place for you at last. I am sorry to have you leave town, but except for that drawback, I think it will be just what you want."

"Leave town?" Mrs. Thorne repeated, with great surprise. "Where is it?"

"In Westerham," Miss Cecil said. "You see it isn't so very far away, after all. If you choose, you can easily come back when better times come for us here. I suppose Craig & Harris will intend to go on again with the straw business by and by, when they have settled with their creditors, and then you would have work here. So you must not consider that you are going into perpetual banishment. But just now it does not seem possible to find either home or work for you here; and there appears to be a good prospect of getting both for you there."

"Are there straw shops in Westerham?" Mrs. Thorne asked. "I never heard of them."

"No, but there is something else, which may do as well," Miss Cecil said. "It seemed so providential that we should hear of it as we did. Dr. Gardiner was there yesterday, visiting an old friend, Mr. Howarth, who is going into business there. He has just opened a chair manufactory, and he took Dr. Gardiner in to see it. He employs a good many women, — some in the shop, and some at home, — and he says they can earn very good wages. The work seemed so easy, and was so profitable, that Dr. Gardiner at once thought of you, and wished you could get a place there. At first, Mr. Howarth said he had all the hands he wanted; but when Dr. Gardiner told him

about you, and explained how much he wanted the place for you, he said he would strain a point, and would either find work, or make it, for you, both for his friend's sake, and for your own. He seemed quite interested in you and the children, and said you might begin as soon as you liked."

"He is very kind," Mrs. Thorne said gratefully, but still looking perplexed. "But I am afraid there is a difficulty in the way. I don't know how to make chairs, Miss Huntington. I never even saw it done. Could I learn without too long delay? What should I have to do?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I am so glad about it, that I am afraid I am not giving a very coherent account of it. It is only weaving the canes to make the seats," Miss Cecil said encouragingly. "The other women have learned, and so would you, in a very little while. Dr. Gardiner says it is nothing compared to the intricacies of crochet! It is only braiding the thin strips of cane, or rattan, in and out, according to a regular rule. It must be very easily learned, and it is light, clean, pleasant work. And when you have become accustomed to it, you can earn much better wages at it, I should judge, than you have earned with the straw. Other women earn a good living there, and I have no doubt that you will. Dr. Gardiner will tell you more about it than I can, for I have it only at second hand, you know. Don't you think you would like it?" she asked, a

little anxiously. "We thought it was just the thing for you."

Mrs. Thorne's look answered her.

"I can't tell you how much I like it," she said, "or how very grateful I am, to both Dr. Gardiner and Mr. Howarth, as well as to you. This is very plainly God's way out, for which I have been looking and waiting, only it is better than anything I dared to hope for. I looked for a little light, but this is a whole flood of sunshine."

"Dr. Gardiner felt so sure that you would like it," Miss Cecil said, much pleased, "that he went on to make inquiries about a home for you. Mr. Howarth interested himself in the matter, and they looked about, examining various houses, until they found one which they thought would answer, and from the description I should think it would just suit you. It is a mile away from the centre of the place, which I suppose is the reason why it happened to be unoccupied, but that makes the rent very low; not quite as much as you have paid here, and I don't think you or Louis will mind the walk."

"Not a bit," said Mrs. Thorne. "We are more than that distance from town here."

"Is that possible?" she said, in surprise. "It never seemed so much to me, perhaps because I am so used to walking out here. But you must not expect anything very fine. It is the tiniest dot of a house you ever saw — not nearly so large

as this. I think there are only three rooms, little ones at that; and an unfinished space above, under the roof, which you can call an attic, if you like. It is a tiny thing, but it is in very decent repair, and there is quite a garden spot attached to it."

"It will be plenty big enough," Mrs. Thorne said, with a glad ring in her voice. "I am only too thankful to have a prospect of having a roof over my head."

"Dr. Gardiner thought you would not object to its size," Miss Cecil said, enjoying her delight; "and he was so certain that you would be pleased with it, that he ventured to rent it; subject, of course, to your approval. 'Taking the refusal of it for two days,' he called it; so that if you did not want it, he could give up the bargain."

"But I do want it," Mrs. Thorne said hastily. "I want it very much. Tell him so, please. And if you would be so kind as to thank him for me — for I am sure I never can thank him half enough. You don't know what a burden of care he has lifted from my mind. It was so good of him to think of us, and to take all that trouble for us."

"I am sure it would have been very bad of him," Miss Cecil said gayly, "and not at all like him, if he had not thought of you, when Providence led him straight to a place so evidently meant for you. Yes; I will take charge of your thanks for him. They will be easily given, for he

will not want anything more than to hear that you are pleased. But he will come himself to see you, and will tell you all about the place and work. I think he meant to come in to-night. It was good of him to let me have the pleasure of giving you the first news of it; and you will have the pleasure of telling Louis."

"It will be a pleasure," his mother said. "It will be a wonderful relief to him as well as to me; he has been so anxious. He has been even more troubled about it than I have, and he is young to have the burden of such care. I am sorry to have his boyhood so clouded."

"He has been anxious lately," Miss Cecil replied; "though I do think he has tried to 'take no thought for the morrow.' People do not learn that in one lesson. But generally, he is one of the happiest boys in my class, in spite of all he has to depress him. I shall miss him very much. That is the one unpleasant thing about it: that we shall lose you all. But, then, when it is so plainly for your advantage, we have no right to be selfish."

"Louis will miss his Sunday-school exceedingly," Mrs. Thorne answered. "And I shall be sorry, too, to take him from Miss Rawson's school. He is just getting interested in his lessons enough to study as he should. I have never known him to do as well as he has this term, though he has had so much outside work to do."

"Perhaps the outside work helped him," Miss

Cecil suggested. "I am glad he is doing so well. But he will find better school privileges at Westerham than we have here. There is a famous academy there, which will give him as good an education as he can get without going to college. I am very glad to hear that he is beginning to realize the importance of studying while he can. You ought to be very proud of your boy, Mrs. Thorne!"

Mrs. Thorne smiled as she answered, "Well, I really think I do my duty in that line, if I don't in any other!"

"I wish I could stay until he comes home," Miss Cecil said. "I should like to see his pleasure. But I shall hear of it, for I hope to see you all again before you go."

She kissed Freda, and went away, leaving sunshine behind her. Mrs. Thorne resumed her packing; but she was surprised to see how much easier it was to fold the garments and lay them in, now that she knew where they were going.

Her heart was full of thankfulness to Him who had, in a manner so little anticipated, opened the way for which she had so long been looking. She had really expected it, day by day; she thought she had fully believed that it would be found; but now, when her "faith was lost in sight," the very relief she felt showed her that a little lurking doubt or fear had lingered in her heart.

She was reminded of a story she had heard of

an old farmer, who was soliloquizing as he drove his oxen home at night, concerning his belief in universal salvation. "I tell you, they can't move me," he said confidentially to himself; "I'm as firm as a rock. I know what I believe as well as any of the parsons do. There's no danger of my not getting to heaven. My doctrine is true; I *know* it is; and yet — and yet, I'd give that yoke of oxen to be *sure* of it!"

So she found that while she had said the Lord would provide for them, and had really thought she believed it, yet she had not been quite sure of it. It was so much easier to believe now, when she could see the provision He had made! But she made fresh resolutions, that, come what might, she would never doubt Him again.

When Louis came home, he found a different atmosphere in the house from what he had left there. Through the windows he heard his mother singing at her work, and Freda's childish treble chiming in, before he reached the house, and was both surprised and glad that they could feel so much lighter-hearted than he did. No one had felt in a singing mood there for many days.

But when he heard the glad tidings which Freda shouted to him the moment he opened the door, he understood what the singing meant. He tossed his hat into the air, catching it deftly as it came down, and gave three rousing cheers upon the spot, in which Freda was only too glad to help.

He hugged his mother till she cried for mercy; he executed an Indian war dance, to Freda's great delight, waving the bread-knife round his head, and uttering unearthly howls; he committed all sorts of extravagances.

Miss Cecil might well say that she would like to see his pleasure, though he would probably have been less demonstrative, under the restraint of her presence.

No stranger who had happened to see the jubilee that the little family held for the next half-hour, would have guessed that the cause of all their rejoicing was nothing more than the prospect of a little house to live in, and a chance to work for their living!

But a home of one's own, however tiny it may be, is a wonderfully valuable thing, when the dreaded poor-house looms in the distance; and a chance to work for one's living is all that people like the Thornes would ask or wish for, since with it they would retain their independence, and shut the door in the face of reluctant charity.

They quieted down at last enough to attend to supper, at which Freda's famous cake made a great figure. She said it came just in time to help them to celebrate the occasion. Louis found it impossible to keep still; he was too much excited; and while the others ate their supper, he walked restlessly back and forth in the little room.

He and Freda indulged in all sorts of speculations about the new home, the new work, the new school, the new church, the new friends, the everything new, which made it seem to them like going into a new world; while their mother listened, put in a cautionary word now and then, when their imaginations took altogether too high a flight, and enjoyed their gladness and their bright anticipations.

"There will be farmers there, of course," Louis said, "because there are always farmers everywhere. I shall get another place like Mr. Lawrence's, just as soon as we get settled, and go to that famous school. I believe that is the best thing of the whole. And it is so good that we are going to get there before the term begins. Everything seems to come just right, all at once, after this doleful time. Now, if Harry could only go too, it would be complete. I shall miss him so much! I wonder if his father wouldn't send him there, by and by?"

He was proceeding to build a series of beautiful castles, whose only defect was in their very airy foundation, when Freda interrupted him with the tidings that she saw Dr. Gardiner coming over the bridge.

He was not their family physician; but this was not, by any means, his first call at Mrs. Thorne's house. He was no stranger there, for, as superintendent of the Sunday-school, he made it his busi-

ness to look after "his boys," and call upon them at their homes.

He came in briskly now, the heat of the evening seeming to have no depressing effect upon him. He had always been a special favorite with Louis, even before he heard Miss Cecil's story of him; and one thing for which he liked him was, he said, that he "never dawdled, but always walked as if he was going somewhere, and meant to get there."

He chatted a moment with Freda, and accepted a bit of her cake, said a pleasant word or two to Louis, and then turned to business.

He explained to Mrs. Thorne just what her work would be, and told her the amount she would probably be able to earn; small at first, but increasing as she gained in readiness and skill, to a sum that she had never earned before. He thought the change would be a very desirable one for her, and would have recommended her to make it, even if her work on straw had not been interrupted. Then he described the little house, which, as Miss Cecil had told them, he said he had taken the liberty to engage for them. He thought it would make them a very cosey little home, and if they liked the place, and stayed there, Louis might dig potatoes in his own garden the next year, instead of in Mr. Lawrence's fields.

"You must let me see to moving your goods and chattels for you," he said as he rose to go; "and then Louis can go with you and Freda to the new home, and be ready to receive them."

"Oh, thank you," she answered gratefully; "but there will really be no need for you to take all that trouble. You have done so much for us already that I don't know how to thank you. I think we could manage very well. You see there are not very many of them," she said, looking round the scantily furnished room.

His glance followed hers.

"But I should not be surprised if you should think there were too many, before you get them all packed," he said lightly. "When one is moving, it isn't an unusual thing to wish that one had fewer possessions. It is the only time that I know of that people want less to call their own. Things seem to have a wonderful way of multiplying themselves then, just for the time, until one feels as if there was no end to them. You must get them ready, and then let me take them in hand. How soon will you be ready for the flitting?"

"By to-morrow," Mrs. Thorne said promptly, with a glance at Louis, who nodded approval.

"Oh, there can be no need for such haste as that," Dr. Gardiner said, with a smile. "That would keep you working late to-night, and hurrying in the morning. It seems to me that we had better say the next day. Then I will send Lynn's man here in the morning, and you will be ready to take tea in your new home by night. If you get through your preparations as early as you think you will to-morrow, you will not be sorry to have

a little time to rest, and to say good by to your friends here."

So it was arranged at last; and Louis and his mother recognized the wisdom of the plan when they found how very busy the work kept them all the next day.

There were so many things, such things as will accumulate in the course of years in even the simplest household, over which they had to hold discussions, — whether they were too good to be thrown away, or were good enough to keep; whether these articles would be likely ever to be of use again, or how those could best be packed so as to make the journey in safety, — that the time slipped away much faster than they expected.

But by night everything was ready, and put in a compact shape ready for Dr. Gardiner's man in the morning. Even their bedsteads were taken down, and they laid their mattresses on the floor of the dismantled house for the night, which Freda thought was great fun.

Not until everything was done that could be done that day, and he had seen his mother resting quietly, did Louis feel himself at liberty to make the farewell visits of which Dr. Gardiner had spoken. He went first to his kind friend, Mr. Lawrence, who was much surprised at the sudden move, of which he had heard nothing.

"So I am going to lose my spare man, am I?" he said, when he had inquired into all the particu-

lars. "When I saw nothing of you to-day, I thought you might be tired of work, and meant to take a holiday; but I didn't dream of your going off, bag and baggage!"

"But I don't think it would make any difference if I was tired of it," Louis objected; "I should come just the same. To tell the truth, I have been tired of it two or three times, but I don't believe anybody found it out. When a thing has got to be done, you know, it doesn't help me much to go to considering whether I'm tired or not; I get along better if I just keep at work, and think of something else. But I know I was glad when I picked up the last potato! And I thought I shouldn't care much, if I never saw another."

"I dare say," Mr. Lawrence responded, laughing. "But you worked well at them; I will say that for you. I shall have to teach Harry to fill your place."

"Oh, don't think of it!" Harry said, in pretended alarm; "I couldn't fill it; I should only rattle round in it, as somebody said! I like better to watch Louis work, than to work myself."

"Honestly owned, at any rate," said his father. "Well, Louis, if things don't go as well as you expect at Westerham, you must come back to us. You will find your place always ready for you. If there are no potatoes to dig, there'll be something else to do. You may be glad to come back yet. Farming is a good thing for steady work,

though one don't very often make a fortune by it, hand over hand. Good by, my boy, and good luck to you!"

Mrs. Lawrence added her good wishes, and sent kind messages to his mother; and Margaret — who had heard what was going on, and who had become much attached to Louis during the hours they had spent together, while he enjoyed the good suppers she prepared, and she enjoyed not less watching the good appetite with which he disposed of them — contrived to be in the way as he was leaving the house, with a huge doughnut for a parting gift.

"Sure I fried it a purpose for ye," she said; "and if I'd thought it was the last, I'd have made wan twice the bigness of it. But good luck go wid yees! Ye'll be afther comin' back again to see us, I hope?"

"Indeed I will, Margaret, if I live," Louis said.

He had been much touched by the kindness of his friends, and could hardly answer Margaret's warm-hearted greeting.

"Live, is it?" she cried, half indignantly. "An' why wouldn't you? May you live to ate the hin that scratches on your grave!"

Margaret's kind wish entirely overcame Louis' melting mood, and both he and Harry burst into a laugh.

"How plain it is that you left Ireland lately, Margaret!" Harry exclaimed.

"Well, an' if I did, there's no better place to leave," she answered quickly.

Harry nodded, for he could not speak.

"It was my cousin, Bridget Halloran, brought me over," Margaret went on. "It does well enough for now, though it's not like Ireland, and I like yees all; but if I live till I die, — and God knows whether I will or not, — I hope to see Ireland itself again before I leave America!"

"I hope you will," Louis managed to say; and then the two boys fairly took to their heels, to have their laugh out in peace, without the danger of hurting the feelings of the good-hearted girl.

The laugh did them good, and they went on their way, chatting quite cheerfully. Harry had insisted on walking home with Louis: he could not bear to lose the last chance they would have of taking that walk together which they had taken so many times. He felt as if he was losing a brother, they had been intimate friends so long, and were bound together by so many ties. He found some comfort in Louis' suggestion that he might follow him to Westerham Academy, and declared that he would speak to his father about it as soon as he reached home, and wondered if Mrs. Thorne would take him as a boarder.

Then they fell into graver talk. With a touch of girlish sentiment they exchanged Testaments, and agreed to read the same chapter daily, and to pray for each other; and then, with promises of frequent letters, they parted.

Though it was growing late, Louis went on to

Miss Cecil's; he could not go without seeing her; but he was not fortunate there. She was engaged with guests; and though she excused herself to them, and came out to speak to him, she could not leave them long. So, instead of the long, helpful talk, on which he had been counting, there was time only for a hurried good by, with messages of regret to his mother and Freda, that she had not been able to see them again, as she had hoped and half promised.

"For yourself, Louis," she said as they parted, "remember that you are not only my knight, but a Christian knight, pledged to God's service. Do your *devoir* bravely. If you ever happen to stand alone in defending the right, with the odds against you, don't yield an inch; but remember that God is always on the side of right, and that 'one, with God, is a majority.' I shall be exceedingly disappointed if I hear anything but good news of you. Never be afraid to show your colors, or to declare under whose flag you fight; and don't be led into any wrong-doing by ridicule or sneers, but live bravely up to the motto of your service, 'Loyalty to God before all.'"

"I mean to try my best for it," Louis answered; "but I shall miss your help so much!"

"Not more than I shall miss yours," she said kindly. "You need not look surprised. You have given me more help and encouragement than you know."

With that pleasant and most unexpected bit of comfort to cheer him, he left her, and went home, stopping only for a few minutes at Mr. Russell's, to give a message from his mother, and to say good by to his pastor and his friend Willie.

Very fortunately for them, the weather the next day was all that could be wished, so that the arrangements which Dr. Gardiner had kindly made for them met with no hindrance. They left the house empty and swept, ready for the new owner; and, as Dr. Gardiner had predicted, when night came, they were in their new home, ready for supper.

The man he sent had not only unloaded the furniture, but had put it in place under Mrs. Thorne's directions, and had helped Louis to put up the stove and the beds, making himself of the greatest possible use; but when Mrs. Thorne asked him what she was to pay him, he only laughed, and said he had been already paid, and it was not the rule in his business to pay at both ends of a trip. He drove off, to the music of his own whistling, and the three were left well established in their new home.

It was a tiny house, as they had been told; but it was large enough for all their needs. It had no paint, except that which the sun and wind had given it; but they are good artists, and the color harmonized well with the landscape around it. The windows were of the smallest, and moss was

finding a foothold on the roof. The house stood on a little knoll; green grass grew all around it; a great oak spread its protecting branches over it, and a little grove of pines stood not far away, with its clean carpet of brown needles. The garden of which Miss Cecil had spoken sloped down to the little river which flowed behind the house.

They looked around with well-satisfied eyes on their new domain. They had thought only of shelter, and had not expected this pretty, peaceful scene; and Mrs. Thorne said, "I don't wonder that Dr. Gardiner thought this place would suit us. We should be very hard to please if it did not. We ought to be very happy here, everything is so pleasant."

Within, the little room seemed very home-like to them already, and the kettle was soon singing over the fire, quite contented with the warm reception that had been given to it, and serenely unconscious of the journey it had taken since morning.

They unpacked their basket of eatables, which contained bread and butter, Freda's eggs, and the remainder of her cake — a tiny piece which she had treasured up; and though the supply was rather scanty, they found themselves hungry and tired enough to thoroughly enjoy the first meal in the new home.

Before they had finished their supper, a young girl came to the door, bringing a basket, and a

pitcher closely wrapped in a towel, from which fragrant steam escaped.

"I am Lucy Prince," she said, introducing herself, and holding out a friendly hand to Mrs. Thorne. "We are your nearest neighbors. We live in that white house over there, and we are very glad to have somebody in this house again. Mother said she knew you would be too tired to cook much to-night, and she sent you a pie and some coffee. She hoped I should be in time for your supper, but I see I am a little late."

"Not too late," Mrs. Thorne said cordially. "We are very much obliged, both to your mother and you. I am glad we have fallen among such kind neighbors. The very smell of that coffee is enough to refresh me."

"Then I hope the taste will do it," Lucy said. "Mother creamed and sugared it, for she thought perhaps you wouldn't have things handy yet; so you have nothing to do but to drink it. No; I am not going to sit down. You must be too tired to want to see people to-night; but mother will come over to-morrow. She said she thought you would sleep better for knowing that you had a friend within reach, if you needed one. I hope we shall be good neighbors, Mrs. Thorne."

Therewith she departed, and the coffee and pie remained to testify in her behalf.

"Now I call that very kind," Mrs. Thorne said. "A neighbor who is so thoughtful for strangers,

must be worth having. It is a comfort, as she said, to know that we have a friend within reach. And I am sure the coffee will help me to sleep — if I don't drink it! — by the kindness of which it is the token. I wish I dared drink it, it smells so good."

She contented herself with only tasting it, and then put it away for breakfast, while Louis attacked the pie.

Whether it was owing to their good neighbor's thoughtfulness, or to her own precaution, must remain unknown; but certainly they all slept soundly that night, and were up bright and early in the morning.

There was so much to be done that the day seemed too short for it. Louis helped his mother until things were sufficiently in order for her to be able to leave them, and report herself to Mr. Howarth as being ready for work. She was anxious to begin at the earliest possible moment.

A little later Louis left Freda in charge of the premises, and sallied forth in search of work for himself. He had no thought of failure, for his mother had not wished to discourage him by suggesting doubts of his success. Where there were farmers, he reasoned, there must be work wanted; but he soon learned, that though it was true that there were farmers in town, and that they wanted their work done, it was not less true that they did not care to engage a boy, and a strange boy at that, to do it.

He reported the failure of his attempt at home. But though he was not inclined to say much about it, beyond the mere statement of the fact, he wore a very sober face, and it did not grow more cheerful as the days went on, and his repeated trials brought no better success.

His mother earned very little while she was learning to work, as Dr. Gardiner had told her in the outset would be the case; and after the little taste of independence he had had in contributing his share to the family treasury, Louis could not bear the thought of being dependent on her scanty earnings for the bread he ate. He wanted to be a support instead of a burden.

He was soon obliged to give up the hope he had cherished of going to school, and only working out of school hours, as he had done at Mr. Lawrence's. It was a question of getting any place, not of getting such a one as he liked. It was evident that the school part of his plan had not a chance of success, but it cost him a great struggle to give it up, even though his mother said she meant that he should enter the school just as soon as she could earn a little more. That was not the same thing, he said. He wanted the chance to study, but he did not want to get it in that way, and he renewed his efforts.

He applied to their good neighbor, Mrs. Prince, for help or suggestions. She made out a list for him of all the farmers in town, as far as she knew

them, and he went the rounds of them all, crossing off one name after another from his list.

But they were scattered all over the outskirts of the town; and when he had walked out three miles to see one and met only a curt refusal, the road seemed to lengthen before his feet as he came back, and he had less courage for the next long walk, which ended in the same way. The refusal always came, and the difference was only in the manner of it. Each time it seemed harder to go home and report his ill-success, though his mother only smiled and said, cheerfully: —

"Better luck next time, Louis. We can manage for the present and shall soon be better off. Remember that there's a good time coming, and don't lose courage."

But the more willing she was to take care of him, the more unwilling he was to be taken care of. He seemed to have grown manly in the last few weeks. He felt as if he ought to be supporting her; but since he could not do that yet, the least he could do was to relieve her of the burden of supporting him, and yet it seemed impossible to do even that. Wherever there was a chance of any one's wanting a boy, he tried, from the storekeepers to the newsman, offering, at last, to work for only his board; but no one wanted him. He began to realize what his good friend, Mr. Lawrence, had done for him.

He had not forgotten how the Lord had showed

them a way out of their last trouble, and he prayed daily for His help in this, — at first, with a firm faith that it would come; and later, with only a resolute perseverance. His prayer was like that of another: —

> The thing I ask Thee for, — how small,
> How trivial must it seem to Thee!
> Yet, Lord, Thou knowest, who knowest all,
> It is no little thing to me.
> So weak, so human, as I be!
> Therefore I make my prayer to-day.
> And as a father pitieth, then,
> Grant me *this little thing*, I pray,
> Through the one sacred Name. Amen!

As the days went on, and it did not come, he was almost in despair. He did not know where to apply next, when one night Mrs. Prince came in.

"No, thank you, I can't sit down," she said; "I only came in of an errand. I've been spending the afternoon with Sally Johnson. I thought of you and asked her if she knew of a place for you. She generally knows everybody's business, and it was a good chance to make her knowledge useful to somebody. She told me that she did hear awhile ago that Aunt Solomon wanted help, but she didn't know of anybody else. There may not anything come of it, you know, for it was some time ago that Sally heard of it, and the place, very likely, has been taken; but you might try,

Louis. No, I can't stop a minute longer, but I thought I would just run in and tell you before I went home."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Prince! What a good friend you are! Of course I'll try," Louis said, springing up. "But who is Aunt Solomon? Where does she live? And what's her other name? I don't suppose I'm to ask to see 'Aunt Solomon.'"

Mrs. Prince laughed.

"Well, I don't know but that you would find her about as soon that way as any," she answered. "Everybody knows her by that name. You will soon find out why when you see her. But you might as well ask for Mrs. Deacon Marten."

"It is too late to go to-night, Louis," his mother said. "You must wait till morning."

"Don't be too sure of getting it, either," Mrs. Prince repeated. "It is only a chance. I didn't mean to stir you up so. Most likely she has got somebody by this time!"

"I dare say," Louis rejoined. "But if she hasn't, she will have the chance to get me in the morning! I do hope the wheel of Fortune has turned at last."

Mrs. Prince gave him full directions for finding the house, and then, with her best wishes for his success, left him to wait as patiently as he might for the morning.

CHAPTER XI.

"Sometime, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash before us, out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue;
And we shall see how all God's plans were right,
And how what seemed reproof, was love most true.

And we shall see how, while we frown and sigh,
God's plans go on as best for you and me;
How, when we called, He heeded not our cry,
Because His wisdom to the end could see,
And even as prudent parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now
Life's sweetest things because it seemeth good."

"THERE'S somebody knocking, Sophy! You will have to go to the door. If I go, whoever it is, will stand there and talk till noon. I dare say it is a book agent, or a man selling notions. It's 'in for a penny, in for a pound,' when they get hold of one. Tell 'em I've got everything in the world that I want, and haven't a cent to buy anything more, nor a minute to spend talking about it. There, he's knocking again! Don't stop to prink any longer, you foolish girl! What do you

suppose he will care how you look? 'All horses are the same color to a blind man.' Do hurry!"

Sophy hurried, according to orders, while she was within reach of her mother's eyes; but she stopped on the stairs to pull down her sleeves, and glanced at the looking-glass, as she went through the sitting-room, to satisfy herself that her hair was in order.

"If it's a book agent, I don't mind," she said to herself; "but if it's somebody else, I don't care to look like a Hottentot!"

"It's a boy who wants to see you," she said, coming back to her mother presently.

"I'll warrant it," Mrs. Marten said impatiently. "If ever I'm up to my elbows in suds, or have turned the house out of the windows for spring cleaning, some one is sure to call; but if I happen to be dressed up in my Sunday best, with nothing to do but to hold my hands, not even a tin pedler comes near me. I'm sure I haven't a minute to waste on any boy to-day. What does he want of me? Why didn't you ask him? However, 'a short horse is soon curried.' I'll be back in two minutes. 'What the fool does in the end, the wise man does in the beginning.' Where did you leave your boy?"

"Standing at the south door. He wouldn't come in," Sophy said, getting upon a chair to take down a picture, and dusting it energetically.

Mrs. Marten had been putting down her sleeves while she talked, from force of habit, but she recol-

lected that it was only a boy, before she untied her apron.

She found the south door closed, and her caller standing on the step outside. She gave him a nod by way of greeting, and waited for him to declare his business.

He looked at her; what he saw was a tall woman, with a sensible face, and a pair of keen eyes; she was dressed in a neat, dark print, which was carefully pinned up, and covered with a huge apron, while a brown barege veil was tied over her hair, as a substitute for a sweeping-cap. The ends of it floated out on each side of her head, as she stood in the breeze at the door, giving an odd suggestion of wings in the wrong place.

She looked at him; what she saw was a fairly well-grown, strongly built boy of fifteen, with black curly hair and bright eyes. He was neatly dressed as far as spotless cleanliness went; but her quick eyes noted that the sleeves of his worn jacket had been pieced out at the wrist, and patched at the elbow, and even a piece of cloth of a different shade had repaired some damage on one shoulder; while his trousers were too short, and the shoes had evidently seen their best days.

A glance had shown her these things, and in the same instant she summed up the items. "The amount of it is," she decided mentally, "he's as poor as Job's cat, but he's got a good mother. He's as tidy as can be, only he's grown out of everything."

He lifted his straw hat respectfully.

"Good morning, Mrs. Marten," he said. "My name is Louis Thorne. Last night I heard that you wanted some one to work for you, and I should like to get the place."

"You?" she said, in surprise. "Oh, I wanted a man."

"Well, I'm a young man!" he returned pleasantly, seeming in no wise discouraged. "And I think I'm as strong as some older men are, and as tall as some others. Couldn't you forget my age — I am growing older every day! — and let me try?"

He straightened himself a little, to look as tall as possible, and his frank, pleasant manner spoke strongly for him.

"You may be as big, but I should be reminded soon enough that you are nothing but a boy," Mrs. Marten said, shaking her head. "You are strong enough, as far as that goes; but 'old heads don't grow on young shoulders,' and you would be a care instead of a help. There are boys enough about the house now. I should never be sure that Dandy had anything to eat, unless I looked in his manger."

"Only try me," Louis urged. "I'll promise you that he shall always have his dinner before I have my own."

"Oh, there's no use talking," she said impatiently, thinking of her suspended work. "I'm

sure I don't know what I'm wasting my time with you here for. I've got plenty else to do with every minute of it. I ought to have told you in the first place that, though I did say I wanted to hire somebody a week ago, I've changed my mind since, and I'm going to do without. I might find an odd job for you now and then, if you don't get steady work," she added, noticing the shadow that fell over his bright face. "If you were only a girl now, you would be just what I want. Haven't you got a sister who wants work?"

"No, ma'am; Freda is sick," he said. "But I know how to do girl's work, Mrs. Marten! I really do. I have always helped my mother about the house, and she says sometimes that I am as good as a girl! She would give me a recommendation for housework, I know. Do let me try. I am sure I could do it."

"You ridiculous boy!" Mrs. Marten responded, laughing heartily. "A minute ago you were sure you could do a man's work, and now you think you can do a girl's. I should like to see you at it!"

"I shall be very glad to let you see me, if you will give me the chance," he said, joining in her laugh. "I don't pretend that I can sew, though I suppose I could learn to do that on a pinch. It can't be anything very hard. But I know that I can sweep, and help about the washing, and cook some things; for I have often done it. I don't say that I like that kind of work, but I can do it,

when I can't get the kind that I do like. Indeed, Mrs. Marten, I am in earnest," he said, growing grave again. "Since we moved here, I have tried everywhere to get work, and I can't find any. This seems to be my last chance, and I want very much to get it, because my mother has no one but me to help her, and instead of helping, I am only a burden. It seems a shame that a great, strong fellow like me should not be able to support himself. So I will do any honest work. I don't care what it is."

"I believe you, my boy," Mrs. Marten said, with unwonted kindness. "But you don't realize how unpleasant this would be. It is vacation now; but school begins next week, and some of the Academy boys board with me. You would not want to do such work after they came. You don't know how they would torment you."

"But I should do it all the same, whether I wanted to or not," he returned. "I've learned that lesson. If the boys want to amuse themselves, I suppose they can; but it will be an old story before long, and I shan't let them keep me from any work I can get. I will do *anything*, except to steal or to beg."

Mrs. Marten wavered a little. Thrift hinted that the combination of man-and-maid-servant, though unusual, would be very convenient; compassion whispered that he needed the place; her womanly nature was attracted by his frank speech

and pleasant face, no less than by his resolute spirit. He saw her hesitation, and pressed his advantage.

"Suppose you were to take me on trial for a day or two?" he suggested. "Then you could tell whether I was likely to be worth my salt."

"Well," she said at last, "it's a queer thing to do, but I may be sorry if I don't do it. 'Some refuse roast meat, and afterwards long for the smoke of it.' I believe I will try you, as you say. What wages do you want?"

"Something to eat, and whatever you think I earn," he answered.

"Well, that's fair," she said. "'When two ride the same horse, one must ride behind;' but if I am both buyer and seller, I'll see that you are not cheated. When will you come?"

"Oh, I *have* come!" he said gayly. His spirits had gone up with a bound. "I can stay now, if you like. Mother will know that I have found work."

"Very well. Then come up stairs," she said, pleased with his promptness. "We are cleaning house, and I can't waste any more time, if I am going to get through before those boys come back again."

He followed her up stairs, and she presented him to the much-astonished Sophy.

"Here's Bridget's successor," she said. "I hope he will be an improvement on her. There's room

enough for it. Oh, you have got all the books and pictures out, and cleared the room. That's a good beginning. Where's the tack-hammer? This carpet is to come up, Louis."

He set to work at once, drew out the tacks, folded the carpet, carried it into the yard, and began cleaning it in a most satisfactory way.

Sophy seized the opportunity of his absence to shower questions about him upon her mother, who was quite unable to answer most of them.

"But I never heard of such a thing!" Sophy said, when she had learned all she could. "He only thinks of the work; and I dare say he can do that, for if his face tells the truth, he has ten times Bridget's sense; but I don't believe he has counted on the rest of it. When Jim Burton finds out that he is doing girl's work, he won't give him much peace. I can't say that I should want to stand in his shoes!"

"Well, 'a laugh breaks no bones,'" Mrs. Marten said, with much composure. "I guess we won't disturb ourselves about it. 'Our worst misfortunes are those that never happen.' Louis looks wide awake, and I have an impression that he can take care of himself. I told him about the boys, but he did not seem frightened about them. I shan't be surprised if he gives Jim Burton as good as he sends. I've taken a fancy to him."

"But you know nothing about him," Sophy said.

"Not a thing," her mother assented, "except just what my own eyes and ears have told me. I shall trust their testimony for the present. The boy's face speaks for him. If he doesn't suit us, we shall be no worse off than we were before, and he may be real good help. 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating.'"

"He has a pleasant face," Sophy admitted, looking out of a window which gave a view of the yard, and the new help at his work, "and I believe he is smart. Do see how he goes at that carpet! Doesn't he make the dust fly! If he isn't 'striking twelve' now, he'll be a treasure."

"Mustn't expect too much," Mrs. Marten said. "He's nothing but a boy, and I don't suppose he is perfect. 'He who wants a horse without a fault may go afoot.' But I liked the spirit he showed; he was ready to take what he could get, if he could not get what he liked. That's the kind of boy that succeeds in the world. He can try it awhile, and I'll be on the lookout to find a place with more suitable work for him. But I wish those boys would just let him alone."

"They won't, then," Sophy said, shaking her head. "It will be nuts to them, you may depend."

"And if I try to caution them, it will only be 'showing the cat the way to the cream,'" Mrs. Marten said. "We shall have to let him fight his own battles, for anything I see. 'Every fox has to take care of his own tail.' But boys are unfeel-

ing creatures sometimes, and I'm afraid he won't lie on a bed of roses."

They worked silently, considering this point, until Louis appeared, with a flushed face, and said: —

"I think the carpet is clean, Mrs. Marten. What comes next?"

"Can you wash windows?" she asked, looking round the room.

"I should think so," he answered. "At least, I can follow directions. Where shall I find my tools?"

She gave him his "tools" and his directions, ending with, "Take care of the corners."

"That sounds natural," he said, setting to work; "for my mother always looked at the corners, to see if the room was clean, after I had swept it."

"That shows that she is a sensible woman," Mrs. Marten said, appreciating that bit of housewifely wisdom.

"You would think so, if you knew her," Louis replied, rubbing the glass vigorously, by way of emphasis, until it shone again. "She's just the best mother a boy ever had!"

"If you said a girl," Sophy interposed, "I should have something to say, because that would be *my* mother!"

"Nonsense," Mrs. Marten said, though she looked pleased. "But it's just as well that you should think so. 'Every mother's child is hand-

some,' and by the same rule, I suppose every child's mother is good. I should like to see your mother, Louis. Have you only that sick sister you spoke of?"

"Only Freda," he answered.

"What an odd name," said Sophy.

"Do you think so?" he returned. "She was named Winifred after my mother, but father always called mother Winnie, and the two Winnies made a confusion, so we gave Freda the other end of the name."

There was a little change in his voice when he spoke of his father; and Mrs. Marten noticing it, refrained from asking the question about him which was on the tip of her tongue, and changed it to an inquiry about Freda's health.

"I don't know whether you would call her sick," Louis said doubtfully. "She doesn't take much medicine now, and she eats like other people; but she hurt her back some months ago, and the doctors said she must not try to sit up for at least a year: so she has to stay in bed."

"Oh, poor child!" said Sophy. "How hard that must be! How did you happen to come here? Did you have friends here?"

"Oh, no," he answered; "we knew no one, but a friend of ours knew Mr. Howarth, and got a place for mother to work with him, and I was glad to come, because of the academy. We hired that tiny cottage next Mr. Prince's, on Woodland

street, very cheap, and I hoped to find a place where I could get work, and perhaps go to school part of the day. But I very soon found that I should have to drop the school idea, and I began to fear the rest must follow it; for I couldn't find anybody who would take me at any price until I came to you, and I was getting pretty well discouraged."

"Oh, well, I wouldn't do that. 'A stout heart breaks ill-luck,' you know," kind-hearted Mrs. Marten said. "It is true that boys are more plenty than places, at this time of year, but we'll be on the watch. 'All comes round to him who can wait,' and something will turn up for you, never fear."

"Thank you," he said, with evident sincerity. "I know there's never any use in getting blue, and I don't often do it; but things did look rather dark this morning, and I didn't know where to turn next. I'm all right now."

"Then perhaps you would like something to eat by and by," she said. "Sophy can finish here, while we get dinner."

Sophy made a comical face, and Louis smiled.

"You have no faith in my powers, just because I'm a boy," he said; "but you will see! Aren't my windows as bright as your Bridget would have made them? I have — Oh, let me carry that!" he broke off, catching a pail of water from Mrs. Marten's hand.

They went down stairs, and he speedily showed that he had not overstated his own abilities. He put the fire in order, filled the kettles with water, prepared the vegetables, laid the table, and in fact did everything that she had been accustomed to expect from her servant girl, and did it all with a deft readiness which contrasted strongly with the style of service which Bridget had been wont to render. His mistress' heart was won long before dinner was ready.

"No, I like to cook my own meat," she said, when he proposed to broil the steak. "Then if it isn't right, there's no one to blame but myself: but I don't doubt that you could do it. I had no idea that a boy could be good for so much in the house."

"Well, you see a boy has to learn, when his mother needs his help," Louis replied. "He has to be both son and daughter sometimes. Shall I feed Dandy now? I'm interested in his having his dinner, since mine depends on his."

"I declare, I had forgotten him!" she said. "Yes; I will show you the way," and she took him out to Dandy's quarters.

The barn was connected with the house by a long, low woodshed.

"So that we can get there without going out doors," she explained. "It comes handy in winter and wet weather."

She introduced him to Dandy, whose looks cer-

tainly did not justify his name, and Louis tried in vain to find something complimentary to say about him. He was too much accustomed to Brown Bess's graceful head and glossy coat to be able to admire Dandy.

"He seems to know you," he said, for the horse whinnied eagerly when he saw his mistress, and began to paw, as if connecting her presence with the idea of dinner.

"Good old fellow!" she said, patting him, and supplying him with two or three apples, which he ate from her hand. "I don't need a horse any more than a robin needs a ladder, but I can't make up my mind to sell Dandy, because my husband raised him, and was so fond of him. I shall depend on your taking good care of him, Louis."

She showed him how to feed him, and explained his other duties, and then they went back to dinner, to which Louis was quite ready to do full justice.

The afternoon was as full of work as the morning had been. He wiped the dinner dishes, which Sophy washed, and learned where their places were; he swept the kitchen, blacked the stove, and mopped the floor; he put down the carpet, and took another one up, and was ready with his help whenever it was needed; and through it all Mrs. Marten watched him with growing satisfaction.

The day's work was done at last, even the milk-

ing, though Mrs. Marten's more skilful hands had to come to his aid to accomplish that. He filled the wood-box, and brought in a basket of chips, in readiness for the morning fire, without waiting to be told to do it; and Mrs. Marten showed him how to "set a sponge" for the breakfast rolls.

Then he said, "If there is nothing more to do to-night, may I go home for an hour?"

"Certainly," Mrs. Marten said. "I am going to make you an offer, and you will want to consult your mother about it. You have proved that you are worth your salt, and a potato to eat with it. 'Where the will is ready, the feet are light.' If you choose to stay, I will keep you until we can find you a better place. If you still want to go to school, I will give you your board for what you can do out of school hours; or, for all your time, I will give you the wages that I gave Bridget, — two dollars a week."

A flood of color came to Louis' face.

"To school!" he said, with shining eyes. "Oh, it won't take long to decide which I choose! I never will lose courage again; I will always think that God will bring things right at last. Only this morning that school looked as far out of my reach as the Kohinoor diamond, and I did want it so much!"

"'When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses comes,'" Mrs. Marten said. "I have faith in a boy who will dig with a spoon when he cannot

get a shovel, and I'm glad to help him. But about the school, you must see what your mother says. She may not agree with you. Stop a minute," — for he had caught up his hat. "Tell your mother that I shall want you here nights, to be ready for work in the morning, but you can run home every evening for a call, if you choose. You have done Bridget's work to-day, and some of a man's besides, and you may like to take your pay home. Here it is."

He looked at the silver she pushed towards him, but did not put out his hand.

"Have I *earned* that?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Why, certainly, you silly boy! It isn't charity, if that is what you are afraid of," she said, laughing. "It is your pay for to-day. Didn't I tell you that you had earned it?"

He took it then, with thanks.

The glow of pleasure was still on his face when he reached home, and his mother greeted him with, —

"Successful at last, my boy, I'm sure!"

"I knew it before I saw you," said Freda. "You didn't come slowly, slowly along the road. You were walking fast, and I heard you whistling 'Yankee Doodle,' so I knew!"

"Yes, I've got a place at last," he said. "And I'll give you three chances, Freda, to guess what I'm doing. If you guess right, you shall have these three beautiful silver dimes; and if you don't, mother shall have them!"

"Ah, you know she will get them, either way," Freda rejoined. "Of course I should give them to her."

"Well, guess," Louis said.

"It must be something very unlikely," she said, considering; "something that I should never think of."

"Right so far; go on," he said.

"Something very unlikely," she repeated. "You are a conductor on the railroad!"

"Not ex-act-ly," he said. "They don't pick up stray boys in the street for that berth. There's one guess gone!"

"A gardener?"

"No; winter's coming. Two!"

"I don't know whether to go up or down for the third guess," she said. "You look happy over it. I think it must be up. You are a clerk in that new bank!"

"Three times, and out!" he said. "What guesses! The cash is yours, mother. Allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Marten's housemaid!"

He finished with an attempt at a courtesy; but the effect was rather lacking in grace, owing to the absence of flowing skirts. Freda looked blank, for she did not understand him, and his mother said, "Suppose you explain."

He did so, giving a history of the day to two most interested auditors.

"You see," he said, in conclusion, "there is nothing for a boy to do here, just now; and when there *is* anything like a chance, there are ten boys after it before one can wink, and the man knows all the other nine, while I am only a 'pilgrim and a stranger.' I'm sure I have tried faithfully to find a crack somewhere to put myself into. When Mrs. Marten refused me, as everybody else had, but said she wanted a girl, which was the first want I had heard of, I actually wished for half a minute that I was a girl, and I do believe I am the only boy in the wide world who can say that! If Barnum knew it, he would want me for a curiosity for his show!

"But then it suddenly flashed across me, like an inspiration, that a boy could do girl's work if he chose. I don't think Mrs. Marten half believed me; but she let me try, and, thanks to your training, I came off with flying colors. I can see that both she and Sophy think it is a stupendous joke, though. Sophy's blue eyes are dancing with fun whenever she looks at me when I am about my work, and I've heard a smothered giggle two or three times."

"I hate that Sophy!" Freda said viciously.

"Because she laughs at your venerable brother when he mops the floor? Oh, nonsense!" Louis answered. "She is a very pretty girl, I can tell you. I guess you would laugh yourself, if you saw me. And what do I care? I would have

taken Dandy's place between the thills, and drawn that ancient buggy — I believe I could travel about as fast as he can! — rather than to come home again to live on mother's earnings. Men ought to support their women kind, instead of being supported by them."

"But you're nothing but a boy," said Freda. "You are not a man."

"Going to be," he returned. "The principle is the same. It's time I began."

"Oh, I shall take my turn by and by," Mrs. Thorne said. "But I am proud of my housemaid, Louis! Only, are you sure that you have counted the cost? I have heard of a man who began to build a tower, and was not able to finish it. The Martens' laugh is a good-natured one, so it is easy to bear. But when those boys come! — "

"Well, when they come, I shall laugh with them," he said cheerily. "That's the only way to do. What's the use of being a boy, if you don't know how to take boys, — and their laugh into the bargain? I don't pretend that I shall like it; but you need not worry about me. I shall come out all right, like a duck after a shower. Now good night! It's getting late for a housemaid to be out alone, and my young man isn't here to wait upon me home! Good night, Freda! When those terrible boys come, if they don't demolish me utterly, I will come over and report progress."

CHAPTER XII.

"Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that;
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toil's obscure, and a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

—ROBERT BURNS.

THE next three days were busy ones. The rest of the house was thoroughly cleaned, and the whole put in perfect order, and a wonderful amount of cooking was done, in preparation for the arrival of the expected boarders.

Through it all, Louis lent most efficient aid; and Mrs. Martin took continual comfort in the prompt readiness which watched for opportunities to render service, and the apt dexterity to which nothing seemed to come amiss.

Much amused though they were at first, both she and Sophy speedily became so much accustomed to the new order of things, that they ceased to smile at the novel housemaid, but called for and received his service as a matter of course; while they found the bright, intelligent fellow a much more pleasant inmate of their kitchen than the ignorant girl whose place he more than filled.

So the hours went smoothly by; one thing after another was finished, until everything was in readiness for the newcomers.

The afternoon of the third day came, and the lumbering coach, which plied between the depot and the village, and rejoiced in the appropriate title of "The Bandbox," came creaking and rumbling up the street, and drew up before Mrs. Marten's door.

Louis was crossing the yard, with a pail of swill for the pigs. He stopped under an apple-tree, and looked at the newcomers with no little curiosity, and at their proceedings with undisguised amusement.

The body of the coach was empty. Three boys were perched on the flat roof, looking as if the first jolt of the vehicle would throw them off; and when the horses stopped, they struck up with one impulse: —

"Here again! Here again! From a foreign shore;
And oh, it makes my heart rejoice,
To see this here once more,
And to know there are goodies galore
Beyond that door!"

Having finished this inspiring chorus, which brought various heads to the neighboring windows, they came to the ground together with a flying leap, which made the coach rock again, and gave the impression for an instant that the air was

full of arms and legs; but they all lighted on their feet, and began to look after their luggage, with a running fire of chaff for the driver, who seemed to enjoy it as much as any one.

"Easy with that trunk, Jack," one called out; "I can't have my Sunday bonnet smashed!"

"That's Burton's name for his dynamite," another explained confidentially; "so you had better mind your *p*'s and *q*'s, and handle it as if it was eggs. We haven't time to pick up little pieces of the trunk, or of you."

"Then give me something soft to drop it on," retorted the laughing driver. "His head, or yours, will do perfectly."

"Can't spare mine for a cushion," Burton said. "Mayn't be much of a head, but its the best in the crowd, I fancy. 'In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed is king,' as Aunt Sol would say. Give me that umberil, Chester."

"Got all your traps?" asked the driver, returning empty-handed.

"Every one; 'Great box, little box, band-box, bundle,'" Burton answered. "Many thanks to you for your kindness, Mr. Jackson. I'll recommend you to my friends. Accept the assurance of my most distinguished consideration. Good afternoon, sir!"

"I'll trouble you for something a little more substantial than that, if you please," the driver said, holding out his hand. "That bank has stopped payment!"

"People are so mercenary nowadays," Burton sighed. "Think of a reasonable man's preferring this dirty specie to pure gratitude, fresh from the mint!"

"I almost ought to be the one to pay," the driver said while he was dipping in his pockets after the change; "for a load of you schoolboys is about equal to a variety show; but fun won't feed my horses."

Louis listened to the exchange of banter, much amused, and curiously examining his future schoolmates. They went into the house, and he carried his pail to the pig-pen, and then went about his work at the barn, much enlivened by the merry sounds from the house, which occasionally reached his ear.

He was shaking down straw for Dandy's bed, when he became aware that the newcomers had invaded his domain.

A voice exclaimed, "Hello! Here's the sheriff in possession!"

He looked around, and one of the boys began singing: —

"Hame cam my gudeman at e'en
And hame cam he;
And there he fand a man
Where a man suld na be.

"'How's this now, my gude wife
How's this?' quo' he,
'How cam this man here,
Wi'out the leave o' me?'"

"Oh, dry up!" said Burton. "How can the fellow speak while you are singing at him? Who may you be, sir?"

"'My name is Norval,'" Louis returned, striking an attitude, and aiding the effect of his gestures with his pitchfork; "'On the Grampian Hills my father feeds his flock.'"

"That frugal swain? Oh, then you an old acquaintance of mine," Burton said, with a laugh.

"Has Dandy set up an establishment of his own while we have been away?" the tallest of the boys inquired.

"On a moderate scale," Louis answered sedately. "So far, it includes only steward and waiter, valet and chambermaid."

The questioner's eyes twinkled.

"All united in one, I suppose," he said.

"At your service," Louis answered.

"You certainly are the most comprehensive fellow I ever heard of," he said; "except that remarkable sailor of the Bab Ballads, who claimed to be —

> "A cook and a captain bold,
> And the mate of the Nancy brig,
> And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,
> And the crew of the captain's gig!

because he had eaten the last of those gentlemen. Do you suppose Dandy would introduce his retinue to us?"

"I will act as his deputy," Louis said. "I am Louis Thorne, at your service."

"And I am Rex Chester," rejoined the other. "Dandy is an old friend of ours. So we just looked in to see how he was prospering. Splendid animal, isn't he?"

"He won't take anybody's dust," Burton chimed in.

"Puts Maud S. far in the shade," drawled the third member of the trio.

"Has he had anything to eat, do you think, since we went away?" Chester asked, looking critically at the horse, who was munching his hay.

"Just a mouthful now and then," Louis said. "He's as thin as a rail, poor fellow; but I am going to fatten him up like a prize pig."

"Don't you do it!" Burton exclaimed hastily, with great energy. "Are you such an innocent as that? I shouldn't have guessed it, from your looks. Why, he's like a singed cat, my dear fellow; better than he looks. A lot of oats, on the sly, just to get the steam up, when you want him to go, is all he needs. Fat him, and he would travel like a cow."

"I'm sure it would improve his looks," Louis said. "As to his speed — I happened to see Mrs. Marten drive him yesterday!"

The others laughed.

"You thought he couldn't keep up with a funeral, I suppose! But Dandy is a sensible beast," Chester remarked. "He always knows who holds the lines, and travels accordingly."

"He is like the monkeys, who can talk, but won't, lest they should be put to work," Burton said. "If Aunt Sol only knew how he can travel, — under favorable circumstances, — she would be slightly astonished!"

"He's bewitched by the fairies, and can only go by moonlight," said Dunham.

Louis was quick-witted, and he understood more than they meant he should.

"I don't think it will be good for his health to go out in the night air, while I have the care of him," he said significantly, "unless his mistress orders it."

The three looked at each other.

Dunham gave a low whistle, and said: —

"Pretty well for a stable boy. One would think he owned the establishment!"

Burton remarked that it was a pleasant thing to have an expert's opinion, and Chester observed that it was time to go in. They went, taking no more notice of Louis.

"Now, I suppose I've got their ill-will in the very beginning, and they did seem such jolly fellows," he said ruefully. "I declare, I felt as if a breeze from the North Pole blew in here when they went out! Well, I couldn't help it. It had to be done. I did want not to understand; but I know it was one of those temptations I was to look out for, since Mrs. Marten trusts me, and it is my business to take care of Dandy. What jolly times

they must have had with the old fellow! I wonder if he really can go more than four miles an hour? Why couldn't they keep their own counsel, and then I shouldn't have had to interfere? I'm sorry to spoil their fun, but I shall keep the key in my pocket after this."

He rather dreaded meeting them again; but when he went into the house, a little later, he was sent two miles away to do an errand, and he saw no more of the strangers that night.

In the early morning he stood at the sink, washing potatoes, and half buried in a big apron with which Mrs. Marten's provident care had furnished him, when Rex Chester passed by the open door.

He stopped short when he caught sight of Louis, who nodded to him by way of greeting, and went on with his work, with a little heightened color, quite conscious that more than one pair of eyes were watching his behavior, and a silent prayer for help rose from his heart.

"Are you going to fatten Dandy on potatoes?" Chester asked, recovering from his surprise.

"Not exactly," said Louis. "These are to fatten bipeds, instead of quadrupeds."

He put the potatoes in the oven, washed his hands, and began to stir the batter for the morning's buckwheat cakes, while Chester stood still and watched him with growing amusement.

"What are you staring at? Go shares in the

sight," said a voice behind him, and Burton peeped over his shoulder.

"Well, — I — never — did!" he said slowly, as he took in the scene.

Then he broke into a laugh, so hearty that it was contagious, and for a minute they all laughed together, until the room rang with their merriment, Louis seeming to enjoy it as much as any one.

"I know your kitchen is forbidden ground to us, Mrs. Marten;" Burton said, when he could speak again; "but please don't shut the door. I know you haven't the heart to refuse to let us stand here, and look at this improving spectacle. I won't meddle with anything, but I must see this show at any price!"

"Admission's free," Louis said pleasantly.

"But I thought you were a groom last night," Chester observed.

"So I was. But I'm a comprehensive fellow, as you said then," Louis rejoined. "Many a true word is spoken in jest. Just now I'm a cook."

He gave a final twirl to his light batter, looking at it with a critical eye, and then went round, filling the syrup cup, cutting bread, and looking after things in general with the utmost composure, and a matter-of-course air which amused the observers exceedingly.

"'Oh, we're ruined by Chinese cheap labor,'" Burton quoted. "You are taking the place of John Chinaman, and I mean to call you Ah Sing."

"All right," Louis said, peeping into the coffee-pot. "Call me any name that you are most familiar with! I'm not particular."

"He really doesn't *look* like a molly coddle, in spite of the big apron," Chester remarked, in a patronizing tone.

"Why should he?" Sophy put in, in spite of a warning glance from her mother, no longer able to restrain herself, though Louis only smiled. "I wish you were half as much of a man as he is, Rex Chester!"

"In a bib and tucker?" Burton said teasingly.

"Manhood that depends on dress doesn't amount to a row of pins," she said, with scorn, giving a glance of meaning at Burton's neat attire. "It is only a step to dudes, and I despise them!"

"Come, come!" Mrs. Marten said; "keep cool, Sophy! Louis can fight his own battles. 'A good knight is never at a loss for a lance!' And as for you, boys, if you want breakfast at any reasonable time this morning, you must shut that door — from the outside!"

"You got through that very well, Louis," she said encouragingly, when they were gone. "I was glad to see that you kept your temper. 'It is the first shower that wets,' so I hope the worst is over. Still, it won't do to give in to them too much. 'If you let them lay the calf on your back, it will not be long before they clap on the cow.' You must make a stand somewhere."

"Oh, they will soon stop when they find that I don't mind it," Louis said. "Fellows get tired of kicking at nothing."

Probably they had not satisfied themselves as to his not minding it; for at breakfast, while they disposed of quantities of Louis' excellent cakes, they amused themselves by "poking fun at the cook," partly incited thereto by Sophy's indignation, and partly by a boyish desire to see if they could make him wince. But he was on his guard, and his shield proved able to turn aside all their thrusts.

"We'll get a rise out of the new cook yet," Dunham mischievously whispered to Sophy, as they responded to the first call of the academy bell.

Louis went a little later, only just in time to take his seat before school began.

Great was the surprise of the three at seeing him there, so "comprehensive" as to be student as well as cook and groom; and greater still was it when they found him, after a slight examination, placed in Burton's class. It was greatest of all when Mr. Ray gave his rare and much-prized commendation, — "Very well done, Thorne," — at the end of his first recitation. It made Louis very happy, and he attacked the next lesson with redoubled energy.

But when the recess came, things were not so pleasant. All the others were old acquaintances,

and they strolled up and down in pairs or clustered in little groups, chatting together, or amused themselves with games; while he stood alone, and felt himself a stranger among them, and longed for Harry.

Though no one spoke to him, and all seemed to be busy with their own affairs, he was painfully conscious of the curious eyes that scanned his appearance, which was so different from that of the others, and he was glad to return to his books, and forget himself in study.

He hurried home, as soon as school was dismissed, and fell to work, answering Mrs. Marten's kind inquiry of how things had gone, with only a brief "Pretty well." He would have scorned a hint that he was homesick, but it was not the less true.

When he went back in the afternoon, it became evident that his schoolmates had found out who he was. The neglect of the morning was pleasant, compared with their too assiduous attention now. They all gathered round him at recess, apparently bent on proving the truth of Mrs. Marten's remark that "boys were unfeeling creatures sometimes."

Louis was no typical hero, superior to all annoyances, and would have much preferred meeting his new friends on equal terms. From the experience of the morning he could guess what was coming: he knew that not only the comfort of his

school life was at stake, but that if he lost his temper, it would tell against his future influence as a Christian. He looked well to the joints of his armor, and braced himself to meet the emergency.

"Oh, Ah Sin, will you take in our washing? Allee washee, you know?" one fellow asked.

He happened to be almost the only untidy boy in school. Louis looked at him and saw his chance.

"I'm sure some one ought," he said. "I don't wonder that you are interested about it!"

And Smith was silenced.

"Where's Fung Wing's pigtail?" called out another.

Louis raised his hat, with a bow, and ran his fingers through his short, thick curls, pretending great surprise at the absence of the Chinese appendage.

"Mother Hubbard has lost her dog!" said another.

"There seems to be plenty of puppies about to choose another from!" he returned, glancing around.

"Really, our Polly Ann seems to be a match for you all," Burton remarked. "One down, t'other come on."

"Did you ever hear what the pollywog said to the tree-toad when he went a-courting?" Louis asked.

"Her small eyes flashed, she swelled until
She looked almost a frog;
'How dare you call me, sir,' she said,
'Your precious Polly Wog?

"'Why, one would think your life was spent
In some low, muddy bog;
I'd have you know, to strange young toads
My name's Miss *Mary* Wog!'"

Great applause followed the quotation. "One wild, wild laugh that tree-toad gave," but the boys surpassed him.

"The moral of which is, that I, being 'a strange young toad,' am not to call him Polly Ann. I told you he was cute!" Burton said, with the air of a proprietor.

Rex Chester, with one or two of the other seniors, stood by, listening to the exchange of schoolboy chaff. It went on for several minutes. Every answer was given with a smile, and greeted with a laugh. The boys found the stranger amusing, and he was rapidly making his way in their good graces.

"Come," he said presently, "you have found me a new name for every day of the week. I'm equal to the English princes for that. I shall have to establish a price-list, if this thing goes on."

"What do you mean?" Dunham asked.

"Well," he said, "I read an account the other day, of a man who used to call his wife all sorts

of names when he got provoked. She did not mind it any more than I do, since it pleased him; but she got tired of it after a while. So she made out a price-list for names; and one day when he happened to be in good humor, she coaxed him to agree to it. Every time he called her a 'lazy old thing,' he was to pay her five cents; 'Cross-patch' was ten cents; 'Old waggle-tongue' was twenty; and 'Ugly old hen' was fifty."

How the boys laughed! "Old waggle-tongue" seemed especially to take their fancy.

"That woman is said to be in a fair way to make her fortune," Louis went on, when he could be heard again; "and if I could follow suit, I might open a bank account; but I'm afraid she took out a patent on her plan."

"Never mind, my dear Louisa," Chester said; "you are quite clever enough to get up one of your own."

"On the contrary," he replied, "I'm too stupid even to see what interests you so much. Are you always so attentive to new scholars?"

"You're doing girls' work," exclaimed half a dozen.

"Don't you like girls?" he inquired, with a pretence of surprised simplicity that brought another shout.

"Girls are well enough in their way; but we don't do their work," Dunham said, with masculine contempt. "Those Woman's Rights women

want to do ours; but I never heard of a man who wanted to meddle with theirs, so you are a curiosity."

"For example?" Louis asked.

"Well, for example, blacking stoves," Dunham said, seizing on the last thing he had seen Louis doing.

"How about the stove-dealers?" said Louis. "Do they hire girls to put the shine on their goods?"

"Sweeping rooms," said Burton.

"I saw that fancy clerk at Clifford's sweeping out the store this morning," Louis returned. "He didn't seem to think any less of himself when he had finished."

Burton was the first to laugh. The "fancy clerk" was his brother, though Louis was not aware of it.

"Washing, then," Peters suggested.

"I haven't tried that yet," Louis said; "but I should be ashamed if I couldn't do it, if a girl can. Besides, who washes for sailors? And on land, do women run all the laundries? Don't you remember how that dandy Mantalini, in "Nicholas Nickleby," turned the mangle? To be sure, I don't know what that is, only I know it had something to do with washing or ironing."

"I believe he was ashamed to be seen," Chester hinted. "Hid under the bed, didn't he?"

"Of course," Louis rejoined promptly. "Such

a cad would be ashamed. A *man* wouldn't! I don't propose to do any work I'm ashamed of."

"But cooking is girl's work, even if the buckwheats *are* tiptop," Burton asserted.

"Is that so?" Louis asked. "Do you know what salary the head cook at the Parker House gets? Four times as much as our minister. And she's a man! I read the other day that Vanderbilt is going to pay his new cook ten thousand dollars a year. And she's a man! I guess any of you would be glad to mix bread and fry buckwheats at that rate. Even when you do it for nothing, who doesn't like to cook when he gets a chance to camp out? It's half the fun."

"Well, there's sewing," Peters said triumphantly. "Men don't do that."

"I can't sew," Louis said, "more than to put on a button; it's convenient to do that sometimes, But any tailor can. Put nine of him together, and he makes a man!"

There was another laugh.

"This fellow may be stupid," said Brewer. "He says he is, and he ought to know. But I don't see it. It seems to me that he has made out his case."

"All the same," Louis remarked, "I don't like doing girls' work any better than you would, though I can do it, and don't intend to be laughed out of it. For I'm bound to have an education. I've got to earn it for myself, or else let my mother

earn it for me, which I couldn't stand. But I'll do any honest work, whether it is blacking boots, or frying buckwheats, to get it. One is as honorable as the other, for anything that I can see, though I don't mean to spend my life doing either. But while I do girls' work, I mean to do it as well as a girl. When I make buckwheats, they are going to be good.

"If I was a cobbler, it should be my pride
The best of all cobblers to be;
If I were a tinker, no tinker beside
Should mend a tin saucepan like me.

"I was glad enough to get a place at Mrs. Marten's, and I shall stick to it until I find something better. And I don't believe it will hinder my being President of these United States!"

"You're a brick!" Rex Chester said emphatically. "Three cheers for Lady Louisa, boys!"

The cheers were given with a will. The admiration of "pluck," which is a part of every boy's nature, and the good feeling, which lies in the depth of every boy's heart, found expression in them. Chester's new name for him found favor with them also. The odd contrast between the aristocratic title and the curly-headed fellow, frank and merry in his patched and faded suit, took their fancy; but its use was kindly, and had no sting.

Mrs. Marten had no occasion to ask, that night,

how things were going. Louis' sparkling eyes and ready laugh told their own tale. But Burton gave an account of the whole affair, with the addition of some explanatory remarks, to the delighted Sophy, winding up with, —

"I believe he's a trump, after all, though I did think once of pinning a dish-cloth on his jacket!"

"Now, Jim, if you begin to plague him, I'll never make you another cream-cake," Sophy said severely.

"Oh, you never would be so cruel," he rejoined, "when you know how much I like them! It is ever so long since I had any. You'll make some to-morrow, I'm sure," he added coaxingly.

"Not the shadow of one," she answered, with decision. "I'll keep them for a reward of merit, and see how you behave, before I make either promises or cakes."

"Oh, I'll behave like an angel," he promised. "Especially as I don't succeed very well in stirring Louis up, he takes everything so coolly. He is up and coming every time, and meets one halfway. I should like to catch him napping, and see him really bothered for once!"

Burton's ideas of angelic behavior were probably peculiar, for he did not think his promise obliged him to give up a plan he had formed for the night.

"Lady Louisa will hold his tongue about it,

you'll see," he said to Dunham; "and we shall have both the cakes and the fun."

If he could have seen Louis' blank face the next morning, and the flash of anger which followed his surprise, the "fun" would have been doubled.

CHAPTER XIII.

"'She is won! We are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow!' quoth young
Lochinvar." —SIR WALTER SCOTT.

POOR Louis! He had risen early, hoping to get his out-door work done in season to secure a little time to study, before Mrs. Marten was ready for his help indoors.

He went first to take care of Dandy. He put his hand in his pocket for the key, as he went through the connecting woodshed, but he could not find it. Then he saw that the door was open, and the key was in the lock.

"How could I be so careless?" he thought. "And yet I seem to remember locking it. I should say I had done it, if the door itself did not contradict me. What would Mrs. Marten say if she knew it?"

Another step brought him in sight of Dandy. He was standing in his stall, with drooping head, and rough, wet hair, a forlorn-looking creature, too tired even to give his usual whinny of welcome, when Louis approached. The buggy, which had been thoroughly washed the night before, was covered with mud. The harness lay in a heap on the floor.

Louis needed no explanation. It was plain enough that the missing key had mysteriously found its way from his pocket to the door, and there had been a moonlight ride. His first thought was an angry one. Then he laughed. "That comes of sleeping so like a top," he said. "They might have carried me off, as well as the key, without my missing myself till morning! I'll say nothing about it, but after this lesson, I'll lock my door. They seem to have had the fun, and Dandy and I take the work."

Rather ruefully he set about the task of grooming Dandy. By the time he was in order again, and the buggy washed once more, all the time he had counted on for study was gone, and Mrs. Marten met him with a rebuke for being late.

Burton gave him an expressive wink, when he came into the breakfast room, and Dunham looked curiously at him; but Louis' face told no tales. For anything that appeared to the contrary, he had noticed nothing unusual.

He said nothing about it, even when Burton and Dunham strolled into the barn at night, and began an easy chat upon the events of the day at school; referring to an extra hard lesson which Mr. Ray had given out, and ending with an offer to help him about his work, that he might the sooner finish it, and be free to study.

"Here, I'll fill your chip-basket," Dunham said. "And I'll give Dandy his supper," Burton added,

"while you make his bed. Make him a good one!"

"Easy with the oats there!" Louis called out, as he heard them raining down. "Give him only that box full. He isn't used to them, and they will go to his head."

"They would do his feet more good," Burton responded, slyly filling the box again and emptying it. Then he called out, "This box full, did you say? I suppose you heap it? I shall. Do as you would be done by, if you were a horse. It is my birthday, — or somebody's, — and the poor beast shall have ten extra oats to remember it by. What comes next?"

"He must think I have neither ears nor wits," thought Louis; "but 'he laughs best who laughs last,' as Mrs. Marten would say."

With such efficient help, the chores for the night were soon done, and the two volunteer aids looked on, while Louis fastened the big barn doors, and locked the one leading into the shed, putting the key into his pocket.

"'Fast bind, fast find,'" Dunham remarked gravely.

Louis bit his lip, and went into the house.

He took good care to lock the door of his room that night; and though he went to bed, yet, taking Dandy's extra oats in connection with the fact that it was somebody's birthday, he thought it would be prudent not to go to sleep.

"If they should happen to call to-night, I would like to know it," he said. "I suppose Burton thought I didn't see him wink to Dunham when I put the key in my pocket."

His intentions were excellent; but it is not an easy thing for a healthy boy, after a long day's work, to lie awake at night, in darkness and silence, and his audible breathing soon gave token that sleep had conquered him.

Nearly an hour went by; still he slept, and nothing happened. Silence reigned in the house.

Then there were stealthy steps outside his door, and the handle was softly turned. There was a little laugh, and a few whispered words; a bit of wire was put into the keyhole and skilfully manipulated; a figure with stockinged feet crept softly into the room, found what it sought by the light of the rising moon, and vanished again; and still Louis slept the unbroken sleep of boyhood. There was another smothered laugh, and then all was still again.

Ten minutes later Louis suddenly waked. He was bewildered at first, for waking in the night was a new experience to him; but he heard again the noise which had startled him from sleep, and he sprang to the window.

Yes; the barn doors, which he had so carefully closed and fastened, were certainly open! He jumped into his clothes, and ran to the door. It was still locked, but — the key was on the other side!

"They reckon without their host, if they think that will keep me here!" he said scornfully.

The next minute he had softly opened his window, swung himself out, and lightly dropped on the roof of the woodshed below, along which he ran like a cat, thanks to his unshod feet.

But with all his haste, he was too late. They were just driving out of the yard, keeping on the grass to avoid noise. They were going slowly, and he slid down the lightning rod, and ran after them, calling to them as he ran.

It was not a very wise proceeding, as he reflected afterward; for naturally they would not choose to hear or to stop.

But he was only in time to hear a mocking laugh, and to see Dandy put to his speed, as soon as they were fairly out of the yard. Horse, buggy, and boys disappeared with a swiftness of which he had never supposed Dandy's four legs capable. He conceived a new respect for him. He watched them out of sight; and then, feeling outwitted and beaten, went back to the barn, crestfallen enough.

There stood, grim and terrible — Mrs. Marten!

She was only half-dressed, not having stopped to complete her toilet, and had covered deficiencies with a great blanket wrapped around her tall figure, like the toga of an ancient Roman. A handkerchief was tied about her head, and an immense frilled nightcap crowned the whole.

She was very angry, and, like most angry

people, was very unreasonable. She thought she understood the whole thing, and therefore refused to listen to Louis, who cowered before the storm of her indignation, as if he had really been the culprit she thought him.

"None so deaf as those who won't hear," she said. "So you couldn't get them to stop for you, and you lost your ride! Honor among thieves isn't worth much, you see."

This explanation of his chase confounded Louis.

"I didn't — " he began, but she silenced him.

"Don't make the matter worse by lying about it," she said sharply. "'He that does amiss never lacks excuse.' You 'didn't'! What brings you here, then, out of your bed at this time of night? 'It takes a good many shovelfuls of earth to bury the truth.' The facts speak for themselves. No; you need not say a word. 'He that excuses himself accuses himself.' It's all my own fault for trusting a boy whom I knew nothing about. 'They wanted a keeper for the pigeon-house, and gave the keys to the cat.' But I was old enough to know better, and I have only myself to thank."

"Do let me speak!" Louis entreated. "I never thought of going with them. I was trying — "

"Oh, no!" she interrupted, "of course not! You seem to forget that I saw you, with my own eyes, trying to overtake them, and calling to them to wait for you. Besides, you had the key; and

Dandy was in your charge. Perhaps you can tell me how they could get him without your help? 'He who holds the ladder is as bad as the burglar.' I may thank the toothache, that kept me awake, for knowing anything about your goings-on. 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.'"

"But *do* believe me!" Louis implored again. "Only listen a minute!"

It was in vain. She would not hear him.

"There's no use talking," she said decisively. "Lock up the barn and bring the key to me. When those young scamps come back, they may ask me for it. As for you, you may go back to bed, and in the morning you can go home. I don't need you any longer. 'When the thief has no opportunity for stealing, he considers himself an honest man;' but I have found you out now. I will say that you did very well until those boys came," she said, softening a little; "but 'he that goes with wolves soon learns to howl,' and Burton would lead George Washington himself into mischief. Come, be quick! Night air isn't good for jumping toothache."

By this time Louis was angry, in his turn. He would not try again to justify himself; but locked the barn, gave her the key, and went to his room without another word.

There his obedience ended. Instead of going to bed, he finished dressing; said good by to the house which had given him a pleasant home, and

was presently in the street, feeling as if he was cast adrift upon the world again.

He knew how to gain admittance to his mother's cottage without disturbing her.

"Windows take the place of doors, to-night. Out of one, and in at another," he said, as he made good his entrance through one.

He threw himself upon his bed, without undressing, and after a time forgot his trouble in sleep.

It was after one o'clock before Dandy came home. He stopped before the closed barn doors and whinnied loudly for admission. Getting no response, he repeated his call, and his mistress answered it. She appeared upon the scene, fully prepared to pour the full torrent of her wrath upon Burton and Dunham, but only innocent Dandy was there to take it.

He looked as if he had been driven hard, but that did not surprise her. He had come back alone, as if he had been off on an independent expedition. But there was no other sign of an accident, and she did not feel uneasy. She called to Louis to come and unharness him. But no Louis answered. She found only his empty room, and had to play groom herself, which did not improve the prospect for the delinquents.

Mrs. Thorne and Freda had nearly finished their breakfast the next morning, when Louis walked into the room, for his wakeful night had made him sleep late. His breakfast was deferred until he

had told his story. Freda gave unbounded sympathy; but he watched his mother's face with a little anxiety in his own.

"So you see I'm afloat again," he finished. "I must hunt up another place, and school will have to wait awhile."

"Not at all," his mother said. "You must have a little patience. Mrs. Marten was angry about her horse, and nervous from her toothache, and spoke hastily; but she will find out the truth and do you justice."

"Even if she does," Louis said, in dismay, "I hope you don't mean that I should go back! I don't think I could do that after such treatment."

"'Till seventy times seven,'" she quoted softly.

Louis was silent. He knew he ought to forgive, but he was not ready.

"Her treatment of you would not have been very unreasonable, would it, if you had really done what she thought you had?" his mother asked. "Look at it from her side. She will find out her mistake. Those boys will acquit you at once when they come back. Truth has a way of coming to light sooner or later."

"Then I wish it would hurry," he said; "but I think she might have trusted me."

"Against her own eyes?"

"She might have let me explain what she saw, but she wouldn't hear a word," he said resentfully. "I shouldn't care what she did, only I hate to lose

my place in my classes. I was just beginning to feel settled in school."

"Go there as usual," Mrs. Thorne advised. "If Mrs. Marten does not take you back, — though I think she will, — we can manage for a few days, until we see what comes next. Meantime, you must go to school, do your best, and be patient."

"And suppose Mrs. Marten's version of the story gets out?" he objected. "I don't mind being laughed at a little, but I can't stand false accusations."

"Easier to bear than true ones, I should think," his mother replied. "Since you know they are false, don't mind them. There's the school bell ringing now."

Louis had been smarting under a sense of injustice; but this common-sense view of the matter appealed to his reason, and he went to school, as she advised.

Burton and Dunham were not there. The weather had changed. It was raining fast; and when recess came, he stayed at his desk. There Rex Chester presently came to him.

"Look here, young man," he said, "Mrs. Marten wants to see you."

"What for? Did she leave anything unsaid last night?" Louis inquired rather stiffly.

It seemed to amuse Chester.

"Oh, come, Lady Louisa," he said, with a laugh, "you mustn't stand too much on your dignity.

It's a graceful thing to meet apologies half-way, especially when it is good Aunt Solomon who has to eat the humble pie. After all, her mistake wasn't so strange. What else could she think?"

"She could have let me speak," Louis said.

"Oh, well, she's a woman, and you must make allowances," Chester said indulgently, from the height of his eighteen years. "Women never stop to reason things out. They just jump at conclusions, and you can't expect them to always land safely on both feet. Besides, you must allow something for that toothache. But you don't know what you lost by running home."

"I know what I had before I went," Louis said grimly.

Chester only laughed again, and went on with his story.

"We had a tempest in a teapot this morning, I can tell you," he said. "It seems those fellows drove over to Porter's last night, with a few others, to celebrate Burton's birthday. They left Dandy unhitched when they went in, not meaning to stay long; and he stands well enough when he hasn't been keyed up to concert-pitch.

"But they stayed longer than they intended; and Dandy, wise fellow, thought it was quite time for decent people to be in bed, so he turned about, and made tracks for his own stable.

"Naturally, when they came out, no Dandy was there. They started after him, guessing what had

happened, but yet in blissful uncertainty whether he had really gone home or had been stolen; and it ended in their walking the whole eight miles, with Mrs. Marten's wrath in view at the end of their walk to encourage them!

"It began to rain, too; came down in torrents; and they were thoroughly drenched. You never saw two more forlorn-looking objects; splashed with mud, so tired that they could hardly put one foot before the other, and dripping like drowned rats.

"They arrived while we were at breakfast, so we watched them come up the road; and then Mrs. Marten just 'went for them.' The lecture you had was a mild specimen; but now she had been bottling up her anger all night, and she just pulled out the cork! It foamed up like soda!

"She couldn't help pitying them either, good soul that she is, because they were so miserable, and the combination was comical enough. She scolded, and rubbed, and threatened, and blanketed, and proverbed, and herb-teaed them, until their lives were a burden to them. You'll see how meek they are! Jim said they meant to pick the lock of the barn door if they could not get the key easily, but he couldn't resist the temptation to lock you in and show you that other people were as smart as you. I suppose you got out over the shed?"

Louis nodded.

"But they cleared you completely, old fellow," Chester said; "and I'm under orders to bring you home with me this noon."

"I'll see," was all Louis would say.

"Till seventy times seven," something seemed to whisper to him. He knew that he ought to forgive even an intentional injury; much more one that was only the result of a mistake. But he had felt deeply hurt, as well as very angry, and forgiveness was not easy. His eyes were on his book, but his mind was busy recalling Mrs. Marten's sharp words and his curt dismissal, and the more he thought of it, the more indignant he felt. Still, through it all, "Till seventy times seven" kept presenting itself, and then there occurred to him the words Miss Cecil had spoken about temptation coming always in some shape for which he was not looking.

"This is Satan again, I'm sure!" he said to himself. "What am I thinking of? Anybody who didn't even pretend to be a Christian would be ashamed not to forgive and forget a blunder, especially when it was owned up, — and look at me! How can I ask to be forgiven when I won't forgive? I didn't know that I was so revengeful. And Mrs. Marten has been so good to me, too! Miss Cecil's knight has been caught napping this time, without his armor on."

A prayer for forgiveness rose from his heart, and then he turned happily to the duty of the

hour. When noon came, he and Chester walked home together. Mrs. Marten welcomed him cordially, though with a little embarrassment, and began to apologize; but he felt much more uncomfortable than when he was scolded, and took his turn in refusing to listen.

"If you can trust me," he said, with a little pride, "that's all that need be said. It was only a mistake, and the sooner it is forgotten, the better."

"'Bought wit is best,'" she said. "Of course I trust you. 'One who has been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a rope,' or I should have known better; but I'll promise to listen to you next time, whatever happens, — if I haven't a toothache driving me out of my senses."

So peace was restored, and Louis dropped contentedly into his old place again.

The two culprits appeared, as Chester had said, very meek and subdued. After the excitement of the affair was over, Mrs. Marten had talked seriously with them.

She explained to them that it was beginning to be understood that laws were made for students as well as for other people. The courts called breaking into barns and taking away teams by a harsher name than "fun." Innocent fun was a good thing; as they knew, she never objected to that; but fun that trespassed on the rights of others, like carrying off gates, or changing business signs, or stealing horses, was never innocent.

The culprits winced a little as she named some of their well-known pranks; but on the whole they took it well, and her grave, earnest words made the impression that her angry scolding had failed to make. They asked forgiveness very humbly, and protested, with the utmost sincerity, that they would never meddle again with Dandy.

"In fact," Burton said, with a smile, "I don't think I shall ever want to see him again! It won't be safe for any one to say 'horse' to me for one while!"

"But I do think you ought to know how Dandy can go, Mrs. Marten," Dunham interposed, from an impulse of benevolence. "Nobody would believe it, who only saw him crawling round town, at the rate of two miles an hour; but he really is a regular clipper! When he gets waked up, he makes the sparks fly, I can tell you! We raced with Adams and Green last night, and beat them out of sight and hearing, and Dandy didn't half try, either. He is a real racer, and it is beautiful to see him go!"

"I dare say," Mrs. Marten answered dryly. "I've seen him often enough, for my husband used to like to put him to his speed. I don't drive slowly because he can't go fast, but because I prefer it. 'He who can't do a thing, always wants to do it; he who can, is content.' When I want Dandy to race, I'll mention it."

At which the boys subsided, and only marvelled

at her queer fancy for creeping when she might fly.

The chief result of the affair was to make Louis' life pleasanter in various ways. It brought him to Chester's notice, who soon became intimate with him, and they were generally together whenever Louis' duties would permit.

Burton and Dunham, too, made overtures of friendship in their own way; but though Louis was a thorough boy, and enjoyed a frolic as much as any one, their pranks were not of a kind that he wanted to share, even if he had time to spare for them.

He met them one day, at some distance from home, smoking cigars. They walked with an air as if they felt themselves taking a long step towards manhood, and evidently expected to make an impression upon Louis.

"Have a weed, Lady Lou?" Dunham asked, offering a cigar.

"I don't smoke," Louis said shortly.

"It's very easy to learn," Burton said, holding his cigar airily between two fingers, while he watched the light wreaths of smoke.

"No good when learned, and very hard to *un*-learn," Louis rejoined, "if old smokers tell the truth. Besides, even if I wanted to turn myself into a walking chimney, the academy rules forbid it."

"Lady Louisa is afraid, I guess!" Dunham sneered.

"Exactly," Louis assented cheerfully. "Afraid, in the first place, of doing wrong by breaking rules; afraid, in the second place, of putting on chains which won't be so easily taken off by and by. I prefer to be a free man."

"Pooh! The chains are lighter than air," Burton said, sending up a fresh cloud.

"Just now they may be," Louis agreed. "In fact, I have a notion that you are more comfortable, at present, with that thing out of your mouth than in it! But ask any old smoker how easily he could give up his tobacco. Ask him, too, whether he would recommend you to learn to smoke."

"Fancy me going round asking people to say their catechism!" Burton laughed.

"My mother says —," Louis began, but Dunham interrupted him.

"Ah-h!" he drawled. "Your ma? Oh-h-h!"

"Apparently you don't care for *your* mother, or for what she says," Louis answered, not at all disturbed. "Perhaps I shouldn't. There's a difference in mothers! But I care for mine. What she doesn't know about some things isn't worth knowing. And I promised her, long ago, that I would never smoke. She says it is bad for a boy's pocket, and health, and brain; and if he wants to make the most of himself, and be the kind of man he ought to be, he will let tobacco alone. I believe she is right, and you won't catch me smok-

ing. I know what it leads to," he added, as to himself.

"If you think my mother isn't as good as yours, any day —," Dunham began, angrily.

"Oh, keep cool!" Burton interposed. "You began it. As to Lady Louisa, he's too good for this wicked world. We've had quite an anti-tobacco lecture, and I propose a vote of thanks to the distinguished lecturer. All those in favor will say Aye!"

Louis laughed. Dunham was sulkily silent; but an unexpected, though familiar voice, behind them responded, "Aye!"

"'I hope they won't poison the fishes,' he said."—P. 293.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I am glad a task to me is given
To labor at, day by day,
For it brings me health, and strength, and hope,
And I cheerfully learn to say,
'Head, you may think; Heart, you may feel;
But Hand, you shall work alway!'"

—Miss L. M. Alcott.

THEY turned quickly, and tried to conceal the cigars, whose tell-tale odor would not be concealed. There stood the man whom, under the circumstances, they most objected to meeting, — the principal of the academy.

"The smoke witnesses against you," he said. "It is like the Afrite of the Eastern story, who could not be compressed into the bottle again, when he had once escaped. You are literally condemned out of your own mouths. You know the rule. You will come to my room to-morrow morning. Meantime, I confiscate the cigars."

He held out his hand, and they reluctantly surrendered their treasures and emptied their pockets. They were all standing on the bridge, and he walked to the railing and dropped the cigars into the water.

"I hope they won't poison the fishes," he said.

He took no more notice of the discomfited pair,

whose faces would have been a prize to a photographer, but told Louis he would walk with him, as he had business to speak of.

He was curious to know what the business could be; but Mr. Ray seemed in no haste to reach it. He asked about his studies, and commended his progress, and told of others who had gained a liberal education by their own efforts, until Louis nearly forgot his curiosity in the interest excited by his teacher's talk.

"In our country any boy can get an education by his own efforts, if he is willing to pay the price," Mr. Ray said. "He must consent to do without a good many things in which boys find pleasure. He must improve his time; he can't spend it in base ball or lawn tennis. He must save the money he earns; he can't spend it in dress or for amusements. He must bend the energy of his mind to his studies; he can't weaken it with dime novels. He must make many sacrifices, and do many things which would seem impossible to boys whose fathers supply them with funds. But — *it pays!* I know that, for I tried it."

"You?" Louis said, in surprise.

"I earned every cent for my education," Mr. Ray answered, "which accounts for my interest in your success. I was even poorer than you, for I had lost my mother. You see the thing can be done. Even your hindrances may help you. The

boy who works six hours and studies three is more likely to make a strong, vigorous man, both physically and mentally, than the one who studies nine hours."

"I see what you mean," Louis said. "It keeps things balanced better. And one's mind must work harder while it does work, and stick close to business during the three hours, instead of taking it easy through nine."

"I only wanted to remind you of the advantages in the disadvantages," Mr. Ray said. "You will find them as you go on. But about my business with you. You know I am one of the trustees of our church. Our sexton has resigned. If you would like to take his place, I can get it for you. We pay two dollars a week, and it would not take very much of your time."

"Oh, thank you! I should like it very much," Louis said regretfully. "But my time doesn't belong to me. Out of school hours, it is Mrs. Marten's."

"I have spoken to her," Mr. Ray rejoined, "and she is perfectly willing that you should have what time you need for this. You can talk it over with her and your mother, and let me know your decision to-morrow. Good night."

He stopped to speak to a friend; and Louis went on his way, feeling as if he trod on air. He was very grateful to Mr. Ray for the sympathy he had shown, and the encouragement he had given him.

"If he could do that, I can," he said, unconsciously straightening himself a little. "He knew just the kind of help I wanted too. I don't want charity; but if I can only get work, and get paid for it, I won't thank the king for calling me cousin!"

The weekly two dollars of the sexton loomed large in his eyes. Like the milkmaid of the fable, he began to reckon how long it would take him to earn a new suit. Thanks to long experience in the art, his mother could "gar auld cla'es luik a' maist as weel as new"; but there is a limit to that process, and it had long ago been reached. When the school-going became possible, she had said anxiously: —

"But how can we get new clothes for you, Louis?"

"That's easily settled," he had answered. "We are not to get them at all. I fought that battle long ago. We haven't the cash. Dr. Gage isn't paid yet, nor Mr. Johnson; and when we run any deeper in debt, I hope it will be for something more necessary than a fancy outfit for me. These clothes are whole (thanks to your skilful fingers, mother), and they are clean (thanks to mine), and they must last until I can earn some new ones. Don't look so sober over it, Freda. It might be worse. Emerson and his brother had only one coat between them, and had to take turns in wearing it to school, while I have mine all to myself!"

He had settled the question promptly, but still he knew perfectly the reception he would meet from his well-dressed schoolmates, and it touched one of his sensitive points. It was harder to go among strangers, than among his old friends, with Harry to stand by him. How often he had longed for Harry here! He had borne the laugh bravely, the contemptuous looks of some, the outspoken ridicule of others; but it had been a daily trial, and the subject of his daily prayer. So far, he had only had the answer with which Paul was contented. Some great trouble might have been more easily borne, he thought, for there was nothing heroic about this. He was mistaken; but heroes are seldom conscious of their own heroism.

His heart bounded now, at the thought that this trouble would soon be ended. He had long ago fixed upon just the kind of suit he wanted, and now he went a little out of his way, to pass a tailor's window, that he might enjoy the sight of it.

Mrs. Marten met him with ready congratulations.

"Didn't I tell you," she said, "that the world is his who has patience?"

"Who has friends, you should say," Louis amended. "You are very kind to give me the time."

"Oh, there'll be enough of that left," she said; "and I like to help a boy who helps himself. He's sure to come out right in the end. 'Fling

him into the river, and he will come up with a fish in his mouth.' Who knows what you may be yet? 'To one who has a pie in the oven, you may give a bit of your cake.' Time may show that I'm only 'giving an egg to get a chicken.'"

"That's promotion from housemaid to housekeeper, isn't it?" Chester said when he heard the news. "Your experience will just come in play."

"Oh, I can do the work," Louis answered. "The only part I dislike, is carrying the notices up to the desk, and acting as usher. But I suppose it can be done," he added resolutely.

Chester understood, and instantly formed his plan.

"Now, that's the only part I should like," he said. "See here, Lady Louisa! Let's go into partnership. You shall do all the drudgery, and have the pay. I don't want anything to do with the one or the other. And I'll take the ornamental department, put in the fancy touches, and oversee you. I'm sure that's fair!"

They laughed over it together, but Chester was in earnest. He urged the merits of his plan, and Louis finally consented to try it.

So the congregation of the West Church was surprised, the next Sabbath, by seeing Chester gracefully ushering strangers up the broad aisle, while Louis was tolling the bell. Burton and Dunham first laughed, then looked enviously on, and at the first opportunity, begged to be allowed to act as ushers for the other aisles.

Sophy took care to provide the four with button-hole bouquets, as a kind of official badge; and so many complimentary remarks were made about the "gentlemanly ushers of the West Church," and they found it so much more pleasant than sitting quietly in their pew, that they attended to their duties *con amore*. Never were strangers more carefully watched for, or more courteously treated, and never was a church kept in more thorough order, than by what Burton called "the quadruple sexton" and "the sexton syndicate."

"'It never rains, but pours;' so here's another chance for you, Louis," Mrs. Marten said, coming into the sitting-room one night. The boys were taking out their books, and Louis had his book propped up on the table before him, and was learning rules, while he picked over a pan of beans. He looked up.

"Farmer Taft is husking corn this week; and if you like to work for him evenings, he will give you ten cents an hour. There's no housework to do in the evening, you know; and if you can manage about your studies, there's a chance to earn something."

"Oh, thank you!" Louis said brightly. "I'll manage some way."

"You won't get rich very fast at that rate," Dunham observed.

"Every little helps," Louis said. "I don't expect to become a millionnaire before next week."

"If Dunham owned the corn, he might think the pay was enough," Mrs. Marten remarked, with some displeasure. "'Broad thongs are cut from other men's leather.' James Taft is a fair man, and that is the going price."

"I think he might pay Lady Louisa a little extra, though," Dunham persisted. "He has plenty of money."

"That makes no difference. What do I care how much he has? I only want work and wages from him, and I suppose he knows what the work is worth," Louis said quickly.

"'No one is so open handed as he who has nothing to give,'" Mrs. Marten moralized. "It is easy to be liberal with another man's purse."

Dunham colored; and to relieve him, Burton said, "If I needed help, I wonder if any one would look out for me, as you do for Louis."

"What would be the use?" she returned. "'Set a frog on a golden stool, and off it hops again into the pond.'"

"Hear that now!" Burton said, in general appeal. "If I was in Lady Louisa's place, I should probably do as he does; sit on my golden stool, and pick over beans."

"Not you. You'd be much more likely to shy them at the cat!" Dunham said ungratefully.

"The thing which has been, is that which shall be," Mrs. Marten said. "'The wolf may change his coat, but he is a wolf still.' You can never make a crab walk straight forwards."

"Oh, fan my brow with a peanut-shell!" Burton exclaimed saucily. "I feel extinguished! A frog, and a wolf, and a crab! I'm a whole menagerie in myself!"

"Be quiet a minute, and let me speak," said Chester. "I have an idea. Though Lady Louisa won't take charity, he won't object to friendly help, especially when it gives his friends a bit of a lark. Husking-bees are jolly, and I don't see why we can't have one, — excepting the girls and the supper! I propose that the 'sexton syndicate' add an hour apiece to Lady Lou's time to-morrow night."

"Carried unanimously," Burton said. "Needn't prick up your ears, Lady Lou. This is our affair. I think it will be fun."

"Very good notion," Mrs. Marten said approvingly, "if you do honest work. 'Three helping each other, are as good as six alone.' As to the fun, I don't doubt that you'll find it. There's more or less of it round, wherever you are. It isn't as though you *had* to do the work, either. 'It is easy to go afoot, when one leads one's horse by the bridle.'"

"We'll try it, anyway," Chester said; "and now, just subside, Burton, for I must go at this essay."

Farmer Taft was rather surprised by the arrival of the "sexton syndicate," and by the discovery that his new hand could work four hours in sixty minutes; but he good-naturedly agreed to the plan,

when he found that the boys meant honest work; and they enjoyed the novelty so much that they agreed to go again the next night.

So the little store of coin which Louis put in his mother's hands steadily grew. Mr. Ray took care that the two dollars were paid weekly, and Mrs. Thorne added to the treasure, whenever she was able to spare a trifle.

If would be hard to say which of the three was most happy, when Louis exhibited himself to his mother and Freda, arrayed in the new suit.

"Oh, doesn't he look nice!" Freda exclaimed breathlessly.

Mrs. Thorne's eyes answered. She smoothed down the pretty gray cloth, picked a stray thread from his sleeve, and ended with a motherly kiss of congratulation.

"I really begin to feel like folks again," Louis said, looking at himself with great satisfaction. "It's a wonderful comfort to know that my sleeves come below my elbows, and that my trousers are not a weak imitation of knickerbockers! I believe I feel a good deal more of a man. It's all very well to sing 'A man's a man for a' that,' and talk of being indifferent to one's dress, but I don't believe anybody 'has a soul above buttons.' When it comes to wearing a threadbare, outgrown suit, that was new in the year one, while all the other fellows are dressed up to the nines, I should like to see the boy who wouldn't feel a

twinge once in awhile! He doesn't live inside of this coat, *I* know!"

"I know it was hard for you," Mrs. Thorne said; "but you have borne it bravely, and you can afford to laugh about it now. Past bitterness makes present sweetness all the sweeter."

"You look better than any of them now," Freda said, with sisterly pride.

"I'm glad I do, to my little sister's eyes. I dare say every one of the other fellows has a sister who tells him exactly the same thing!" he answered merrily. "Now if you have admired my fine array enough, I'll make a bundle of the old standbys, and take them with me. I'm not going to make bread, or groom Dandy, in these, I can tell you."

"An overcoat must come next," his mother said, as she helped him to put his bundle into shapely form.

"I don't feel as if I ever should be cold," he said. "No; it is your turn. You never think of yourself. A shawl is to come next. Good night."

Mrs. Marten commended the new attire in her own fashion.

"Fine feathers make fine birds," she said, after feeling the texture of the cloth, and admiring the fit. "I should hardly know you. I was sure you would get them soon. 'With time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin.' Well, if they wear according to your deserts, you won't need another outfit until your hair is gray!"

The boys greeted this with a laugh. They all felt an especial interest in the clothes, which their kindness had helped him to get; and Burton, who prided himself upon the correctness of his own attire, turned him about and examined them critically, but ended by pronouncing them "O. K."

Louis liked Chester's comment best, though it made him blush like a girl. It was addressed to Mrs. Marten, and not intended for his ears, but he heard it.

"I didn't know before that he was such a fine-looking fellow," Chester said. "'Beauty unadorned' is nonsense; but even the old suit couldn't hide the fact that he was a thorough gentleman."

After this the world went very smoothly with Louis for a time. Declamation day was no longer dreaded, and the sexton relieved his volunteer aid of the duty of taking notices up to the desk.

When the corn was husked, Mr. Ray introduced him to a friend, who wanted some manuscripts copied; and when that was done, Dr. Grey set him to posting his books. Every one seemed willing to help him, and he worked and studied with equal ardor, throwing himself heartily into whatever the task of the hour might be.

He had become a leader among the boys in one way, as Burton was in another. When any mischief was on hand, Burton came to the front; for anything else, they turned to Louis.

When he first came to Westerham, a Christian

Endeavor society had just been formed there, and he joined it at once. He was at first one of its most earnest members, and then became one of its most influential ones. He enjoyed its meetings exceedingly, and wrote such glowing accounts of them to Harry, that he took counsel with Dr. Gardiner and Mr. Russell about organizing one in their church.

Louis had persuaded some of the boys to become associate members. Burton was among these, and Louis felt quite sure that the truth had made a deeper impression upon him than he was willing to allow to others.

Miss Cecil's knight had not forgotten her teachings. He had shown his colors. All the school knew that he was a Christian, and enjoyed his prayer-meetings, just as they knew that he was a capital ball-player, and enjoyed his games. It was no more necessary for him to declare the one fact than the other; they needed only to look at him. He seemed to throw his energies equally into both.

Now and then, when his strict principles of right interfered with something that they wanted him to do, some one would try the effect of a sneer or a taunt, but the sentiment of the school was not with them. As a general thing, they recognized that his standard was higher than theirs, and respected his effort to reach it, even though it sometimes failed.

"I never saw such a fellow!" Burton said to Mrs. Marten the Sunday that Louis united with the church. He had stayed to witness the ceremony. "I believe in his religion, because I can't help it. He doesn't try to hide it, but comes right out with it, man fashion, as if he was proud of it. You can see it behind everything he does. And you would think the boys would tease him unmercifully about it, since he is the only one that flies that flag; but they don't!"

"I shouldn't expect they would," Mrs. Marten said. "First, because they know better, and then because it is the half-way Christians, who try to 'hunt with the hounds and run with the hare,' who get teased; not boys like Louis."

"All the same, some of them tried it a little at first," Burton said; "but they soon gave it up. He told me once that he wore armor, and I believe he does. I shouldn't object to a suit of it."

"He hasn't got anything that you can't have just as well," Mrs. Marten returned. "Why don't you get it for yourself?"

"Oh, well, I hope I shall, some day," he said, more gravely than he often spoke.

"You won't have any better day than this," Mrs. Marten said. "'What may be done at any time, will be done at no time.' You had better settle it now. How do you know you will have another chance? 'When the fool had made up his mind, the market had gone by.'"

But Burton only shook his head. He was not ready. But he did try to amend his ways, and, as he remarked to Louis, made up his mind to "go into the wholesale good-resolution business," and he would not be convinced that it was not enough, or that the bitter fountain could not send forth sweet waters. Still, he seemed to feel that he needed help, for he deserted Dunham, and attached himself to Louis, whenever it was possible.

CHAPTER XV.

"Heaven is not reached at a single bound;
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to the summit round by round."

—J. G. HOLLAND.

MOST of the academy boys went to hear Mr. Ray's lecture on "Watchwords," the third in the "People's Course," and supported their teacher by applauding in every possible place. Fortunately for their credit, the lecture deserved applause.

"What did you think of that?" Burton asked, as he left the hall with Louis. "Wasn't it splendid? I'm proud of Mr. Ray. That's the kind of talk that makes a fellow tingle from the top curl of his hair down to the tips of his toes! I feel thoroughly stirred up!"

"So I see," Louis said, laughing. "'A little pot is soon hot,' Mrs. Marten would say."

"I guess the big kettle felt the fire, too," Burton retorted. "Didn't I see you devouring every word, as if they were sugar-plums? Own up, now, like a little man, that you liked it as much as I did."

"Just as much," Louis said, "and I mean to remember it."

"Of course," Burton said. "So do I. To prove it, I'm going to pick out a watchword for myself on the spot. I dare say you've got yours already. You always do manage to head the procession!"

"I chose mine months ago," Louis said. "It is 'Loyalty to God!'"

"Oh!" Burton said. "Of course. But can't you get something for an addition to that; a sort of appendix; something smaller, that we can have together? If we had the same word, we could make a sort of Freemason affair of it, you know, and have a signal to remind each other of it. And let me choose it; there's a good fellow. I've just thought of a first-rate one."

"It must be an odd one if it is better than mine," Louis said. "I don't believe it is between the covers of the dictionary. I've proved mine."

"There's too much of it — and in it!" said Burton. "Stick to one word."

"Let's hear it," said Louis, "and I'll consider it."

Burton made a dramatic pause, and then said impressively: —

"WOLVES!"

"What?" Louis exclaimed, unable to believe his ears.

"*Wolves!*" Burton repeated, delighted with the effect he had produced.

Louis stopped short under the next lamp-post, and twisted him round, so that the light fell on his face.

"You don't look crazy," he remarked, as he released him, and walked on.

"I should think not," said Burton. "That's the beauty of the word, — that nobody will know what it means."

"Oh! I didn't understand that you meant to send the town crier around to proclaim it," Louis observed dryly. "If you do, I advise putting it into Hebrew."

"Don't you remember the wolf piece I had for Rhetoricals last term?" Burton asked, scorning the hint; and throwing himself into a stage attitude, he declaimed: —

"Three gaunt, grim wolves that hunt for men,
Three gaunt, grim wolves there be;
And one is Hunger, and one is Sin,
And one is Misery.

"I sit and think till my head is sore,
While the wolf, or the wind, keeps shaking the door,
And I cry to myself, 'If the wolf be Sin,
He shall not come in! He *shall not* come in!'"

"All right," said Louis. "I see. Only beware of Little Red Riding Hood's fate. You know she couldn't detect the wolf in his disguise, until she felt his sharp teeth."

"Pooh!" Burton responded scornfully. "If I don't know a wolf when I see him, he is welcome to bite me."

"But his teeth might be sharp," Louis sug-

gested, "even if he was covered with a sheep's skin."

"Oh, a bit of the real animal always peeps out somewhere," Burton asserted; "enough to label him, at any rate. Why, man alive," he went on, dropping figures, "don't you see that a thing must be right or wrong, good or bad? And if every time I take a notion to go the wrong side of the post, I say to myself, 'Wolves!' and back out, what's going to prevent my keeping in the straight road? I'll try it for a day, anyway. It won't take an act of Congress to change it, if it doesn't work. You don't seem to appreciate it. Just produce a better one!"

"I couldn't have honored your check two minutes ago," Louis said. "There were no funds in the bank then; but I'm supplied now, thanks to you. I'm going to try the virtues of 'Or.'"

It was now Burton's turn to say "What?" and he said it.

"Or," Louis repeated. "You said a thing must be right *or* wrong, good *or* bad, and 'Or' will make me consider which it is; and then my 'Loyalty to God' will know what to do with it."

"I stick to my 'wolves,'" said Burton. "Give me a nudge if you see them when I don't."

Just then they reached Mrs. Marten's, and were greeted by a group of their schoolmates.

"Here you are at last!" Brewer exclaimed. "We've been waiting for you this half-hour.

There's business on hand. First, will you go to the concert at Wayne to-morrow? The Amherst Glee Club are going to sing college songs, you know, and we've engaged Smith's barge, and the black horses, and the seats are all taken except two that we left for you; and best of all, here's Marsden says he will stand treat for our crowd."

"That's jolly of you, Marsden! When I make my fortune, I'll do as much for somebody else. Of course we'll go, and be glad to," Louis said heartily, for nothing could have seemed more charming to him.

"Got leave from the Prof., I suppose?" said Burton.

"Of course. That's all right, then," Brewer said; "but the next thing *isn't* all right."

"What's the matter?" Burton asked.

"Just this. Isn't to-morrow a holiday?"

"Of course it is," said a chorus of voices.

"But here's the Prof. says Latin is to come as usual in the morning, and then his lordship graciously gives us the *rest* of the day, when every inch of it belongs to us!"

"And we'll have it, too!" shouted the chorus.

"'Britons never shall be slaves!'"

"'Millions for defence, but not a cent for tribute!'"

"But what is it for?" Louis asked, when he could make his voice heard. "I don't understand it."

"No more don't nobody!" said Peters, with reckless disregard of grammar. "But there's the notice on the bulletin board. It's only our Cæsar class. The rest of the fellows have the day."

"It's a shame!" Louis said, growing indignant. "Now I've got to study, and I was going to do something else."

"And there's the skating. The ice is tip-top now," groaned Dunham.

The reminder was fuel to the flame, and the excitement increased. All were talking at once.

More than one oath fell on Louis' ear; and at last he heard Burton's angry voice uttering, not an oath, for he would not descend to that, but the nearest approach to one that his conscience would allow; and it came much nearer to the real thing than Louis liked.

"Look out!" he exclaimed quickly.

"What's the matter?" Peters demanded. "Did you see the Prof.?"

"No," Louis said. "I thought I heard a wolf!"

"Which way? where?" said eager voices; and Dunham said, after listening and hearing nothing, "Pooh! you're dreaming. Wolves don't live this side of the Rocky Mountains. What did it sound like?"

"Like a wolf," Louis said coolly. "I'm not up in natural history, and I don't know whether the creatures bark, or growl, or what, but I'm sure it was a wolf!"

"Well, it's gone, and I guess it won't come back!" Burton said in an odd tone. "Let's go back to business. Are we to cut the recitation, or remonstrate, or what? We can't submit to this, you know."

A variety of propositions followed, from carrying out Burton's suggestions to cutting the rope of the academy bell.

"We can't be blamed for not knowing when it is time for Cæsar, if the bell doesn't ring," the proposer of this plan urged.

"We haven't heard from you, Thorne," Dunham said at last. "Hush up, boys! Lady Lou has the floor."

For once Louis was not ready to speak. Burton's repeated "ors" had reminded him of his watchword.

"I suppose it is obedience *or* rebellion, respect *or* insult to Mr. Ray," he said to himself. "But what a bother it is! I want the time, and I want the fun; and the fellows will be provoked if I back out. Dear me, there it is again! What's right, *or* what folks say? Why should I care what they say? I know what is right; I've got to catch it from conscience *or* the crowd, and I know which dose would be the worse to take."

But he did care, nevertheless, and he had reached only this point when Dunham called for his views. He braced himself up with the thought of Miss Cecil's parting words: "Don't be led into wrong-doing by the fear of ridicule."

"I've nothing to say that you'll like to hear," he began. "I don't think we have any right to meddle with other people's property, even to pay them off. You know, as well as I, whether it is honest and gentlemanly, *or* — the other thing. The *Transcript* calls us 'the young gentlemen of the academy'; and if the editor should call us thieves or rowdies to-morrow, it wouldn't be pleasant to have to say, 'You're right, sir!'"

"Good for you!" said the chorus, never doubting that this was the prelude to some other plan.

"To-morrow is Mr. Ray's holiday as well as ours," Louis went on. "I don't think the most amusing thing he could find to do with it would be hearing us blunder through a Latin lesson. I can't imagine why he wants to do it; but since he does, I shall give him the pleasure of hearing me if I have to recite alone. I suppose he has a reason, though I can't guess it."

Dead silence followed.

"Got a headache, Louis?" Peters asked sympathetically.

"Not any, thank you," Louis said.

"Feel feverish?"

"Cool as a cucumber."

"All the same, I'm sure you've got brain fever coming on. You don't mean to stand out against all the class?"

"Against all the school, if I know I'm right."

"Do you pretend, in earnest, that you like to

lose the best part of the holiday, and cram up for recitation?"

"Like it? I hate it!" Louis said frankly.

"But you're going to do it?"

"Exactly."

"Then, if you've got a reason why, do give it!"

Peters spoke as if he was at the end of his patience, and Louis' first impulse was to retort that his reasons were his own private property. But the second thought was, "Shall I dodge, *or* face the music?" And he answered squarely: —

"I thought I had given it. It is because I am going to do what I ought instead of what I like. My Bible tells me to obey those in authority over me, and that means Mr. Ray."

"How wonderfully good we are!" Peters remarked contemptuously. "We ought to be wrapped up in cotton, and only looked at Sundays!"

A low hiss from some of the others followed. The blood rushed to Louis' cheek, and his hands involuntarily doubled into fists. He had been lately used to applause, and had almost forgotten how to bear sneers. He did forget both his watchwords for the moment, and made a threatening gesture, which Peters was quite ready to meet. But two of the others interposed at the same minute.

"Come," Burton said; "twitting *or* fighting won't do any good."

"Hold on there, boys!" Brewer said. "Shall you insist on reciting, Thorne, if the Prof. dismisses the class?"

"Of course not," Louis said.

"Drop it there, then," he rejoined. "I heard Mr. Ray and my uncle talking over some of their college tricks last week. We'll try one of them, and you'll see he will dismiss us."

"I will have nothing to do with tricks of any kind," said Louis. "What are you going to do?"

"Never you mind," said Brewer, laughing; "only you needn't waste your time getting up that lesson, unless you choose."

Not another word would he say; but the morning brought enlightenment. The Latin class was promptly on hand, and Louis was called up.

"I've lost my Cæsar, sir," he said as he rose.

"Smith will lend you his," said Mr. Ray.

"Certainly, sir," said Smith; "but I have lost mine."

Mr. Ray's eyes twinkled a little.

"Have you prepared your lesson, Thorne?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Louis answered.

"When did you lose your book?"

"I left it on my table before breakfast, and I haven't been able to find it since," Louis said.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ray. "Is any one here in possession of one?"

He glanced over the class. They were preternaturally grave, but no one had a book.

"Brewer," he said suddenly, "do you know where these missing books are?"

"Why, no, sir!" Brewer replied, in innocent surprise.

"I won't pursue that inquiry at present," Mr. Ray said, with a little emphasis on the last two words. "Fortunately, my copy has not vanished."

He held it out to Louis, who could not restrain a smile as he stepped up to take it, while the others looked blank. But before he finished the first line, a boot was drawn sharply over the floor, followed instantly by a general scraping, which drowned his voice.

Mr. Ray's lips were seen to move, and the sound ceased. They listened in silence to his sharp reproof; but as soon as Louis began reading, the noise re-commenced. He repeated the trial with the same result; most respectful attention to all he said, followed by "confusion worse confounded," as soon as Louis opened his lips. He reflected a moment.

"The affair of the books might be a joke," he said; "this is an insult; and you must take the consequences. You are dismissed for to-day."

Little they cared for the future reckoning, since they had gained their present point; and they hurried out in high glee.

"Didn't I say so?" said Brewer, exultantly.

"'And everybody praised the duke,
Who this great fight did win.'
'But what good came of it at last?'
Quoth little Peterkin.
'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he,
'But 'twas a famous victory!'"

Louis quoted, with significance. "You don't know what may come of it yet. And how could you say you didn't know where the books were?"

"What else could I say?" said Brewer. "'I can't tell a lie, pa.' Do you suppose I hid those books? No, sir! I merely remarked before Jones, junior, that our class would be very grateful to any one who would take care of our Cæsars to-day. The youngster is good at taking hints; but I don't know that he took the books. He didn't tell me of it. *I* don't know where they are!"

"Facts, on the surface," thought Louis, "but at the bottom, truth *or* falsehood?"

"Here's a pretty state of things!" Peters exclaimed, coming up to a group of his friends late in the afternoon. "We can't go to-night! The Prof. forbids it."

"What's the reason?" Burton demanded. "I wonder what he'll do next!"

"Well," Peters said, "he did allude to this morning's affair, — 'disgraceful scene,' I think he called it, — and hinted about 'loss of confidence.' That might have something to do with it!"

"Pooh!" Dunham said, in deep disgust. "I

thought he could take a joke better than that! What's to be done? It isn't fair to Marsden, for he's bought the tickets and engaged the team. Besides, the whole town will be laughing at us before morning."

"I'll risk it and go, if the rest of you will," Brewer said suddenly. "At the worst, I don't suppose the Prof. will eat us."

It was too tempting. No one refused.

"We'll start from Smith's," Peters said. "And look here, boys. Don't mention this hitch in the programme to Lady Lou. Unless he has come to his senses, he might refuse to go, and we must have the old fellow. The Prof. can't forbid the town boys; but there's no knowing what notion of right or wrong he may take. Keep it dark!"

Burton had an uneasy consciousness that there was a "wolf" in the immediate vicinity; but the escapade promised to be such fun that he could not give it up, and he coined excuses enough for doing as he wished, to bury the animal fathoms deep.

They safely effected their departure from Smith's, and once fairly on the way, their spirits rose to nonsense pitch. Tin horns mysteriously appeared and were blown with ear-splitting effect. Songs were sung, with chorus "by the whole strength of the company." Uproarious laughter greeted the weakest attempt at a joke. Every one they met was saluted with cheers. In the midst of the fun, Peters produced a parcel.

"Here's something comforting," he said. "Pass 'em along, Dick."

In a moment, faint clouds of smoke floated up, tainting the clear air. No one was making his first acquaintance with the weed; and as Dunham remarked, it was "the thing," to smoke on such an occasion. Peters considerately lighted one, and put it in Louis' fingers.

"Do be sensible for once," he whispered, "and do as the rest do."

"Good habit *or* bad?" Louis returned, in the same low tone. "Benefit *or* injury? Pleasure enough to balance the harm, *or* harm enough to outweigh the pleasure? They say it leads to something else. Easier to stop now, *or* by and by? I've heard the habit grows on one. A man *or* a chimney? My promise to my mother, *or* pleasing the boys? Thank you, Peters, but here goes!"

Out went the cigar on the snow. No one had heard them; but Burton uttered a subdued "Hollo!" when he saw the little red spark shooting through the air.

"It's a wolf, or first cousin to one," Louis remarked, in an undertone; but Brewer caught the word.

"What!" he exclaimed sharply. "Hasn't that wolf of yours got out of hearing yet, Lady Lou?"

"I didn't hear him this time," Louis said meekly. "I saw his eyes, and felt his hot breath!"

"Nonsense!" Brewer said. "It's a stray cat,

unless you've got delirium tremens. If there was a wolf round, he wouldn't come near a lot of fellows, who could out-howl him without half trying!"

Louis was not so sure of it. He looked at Burton; but Burton said nothing, and puffed the more.

"Come, you've got wolf on the brain," Brewer said. "I'll insure you against them for a dime. There's no bite to all the wolves you'll find here."

Louis looked at Burton again, and replied, —

"There was a young man of Gretna,
Who jumped down the crater of Ætna.
When they asked, 'Is it hot?'
He replied, 'It is not!'
That mendacious young person of Gretna."

He was soon again, as usual, the life of the party. He capped every remark with one still more ridiculous; he improvised a song on the day's events, *à la Hook*, each line followed by the rousing "Up-i-dee" chorus; he uttered such brilliant witticisms that his hearers laughed until they could only gasp out, "What a fellow you are, Lady Lou!"

In the midst of their fun the lights of Wayne came in sight.

"We're in good time," Marsden observed.

"Look here!" Dunham said suddenly. "When I passed the Prof.'s house, I saw him driving off. I just remembered it. Could he be going to the concert? Suppose he should see us there?"

"Whew!" whistled Peters. "We must run our chance, and trust to luck. We can't dodge, because the tickets fix our seats."

Louis heard, but could not understand.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "What if he should see us? A cat can look at a king."

"Well," Peters said, seeing that the thing must come out, "there's no telling what would happen. He's up to anything. Might make me sing a solo."

Louis was more perplexed than ever; but a few urgent questions brought out the facts, given the more willingly since the others enjoyed his surprise, and were certain that he could not escape.

"You see you are in for it now," Dunham said exultantly, feeling sure that Louis would enjoy the joke as much as any one, after the first minute of chagrin.

"Right, *or* wrong?" thought Louis. "Flat rebellion against the Prof., *or* a minority of one?"

The option was not a pleasant one, and Louis considered it a minute. It reminded him of Miss Cecil's quotation, "One with God is a majority." At the thought his mind was made up.

"Come, you're in for it," Dunham repeated. "But you know you townies are not under rules out of school hours. It's only us boarders, so the Prof. has nothing to say to you. And if he had, you can't help yourself now; so don't be cranky, old fellow."

"Two mistakes there," said Louis. "It's plain that Mr. Ray meant to forbid the whole expedition, so I ought not to be here. And I think I can help myself, so long as I have two good feet of my own!"

"Perhaps you don't know that your two good feet are ten miles from home," Peters observed.

"It would take more than ten miles to frighten them," Louis responded. "I'd rather carry an approving conscience twice the distance than to stay here and know I was doing wrong."

"Oh, bother!" said Peters. "You'd better get your approving conscience framed, and hang it up to look at!"

Louis would not seem to hear.

"Come, boys," he said, "you know we've no business to go in the teeth of the Prof.'s orders, and you'll be sure to find your match in him. You had better take the back track with me."

"Oh, I see!" Dunham said; "Lady Louisa's afraid!"

It was the taunt, of all possible ones, the hardest to bear. Louis' eyes flashed, and he sprung to his feet.

"Afraid! Of doing right, *or* of being laughed at!" The thought was as quick as the motion. "Miss Cecil's knight isn't going to be a coward, for fear of being called one. Am I going to hide my flag because they choose to sneer at it?"

"Just as you like," he said firmly. "You all

know whether I'm likely to be afraid or not. And you know what is right as well as I. A Christian has no business to do what he knows is wrong. I don't think anybody else has, either! Now, once for all, will you give this thing up, and go back?"

"No, we won't!" was the prompt response.

"Then good by," Louis said, and the next instant he was standing in the snowy road.

"Your wolf will catch you!" Brewer shouted back, as they drove on.

"Not he! I've left him among you," Louis replied.

He looked after them until the sound of the bells died away in the distance, and then began his long lonely walk. At first he was not in a cheerful mood. The silence and loneliness, contrasted with the merry party he had left, were not inspiriting, and he regretted losing the concert, from which he had anticipated so much pleasure. But, on the other hand, he had the "approving conscience" of which he had spoken, and he said, "I ought to be glad of a chance to sacrifice something for my Master." His heart grew lighter, and he walked cheerily on, until he was roused by a shout. He waited, and presently Burton appeared.

"Good for you! Where's the rest?" was Louis' greeting.

"In Wayne Hall, I suppose, having a jolly time," Burton answered, a little ruefully. "But

you know you left my wolf in the sleigh, and, though I tried to believe he wasn't there, he kept biting till I thought it was time to see about it."

"Ah!" said Louis. "I was sure you would say, —

> "'If the wolf be sin,
> He shall not come in,'

if you would only think of it."

"But I didn't." said Burton. "I hadn't pluck enough to face him as you did, so I only said as meekly as possible, "I guess, on the whole, if you don't mind, perhaps you had better not come in this time!"

"Don't slander yourself," said Louis.

"It's true enough," Burton said. "I don't say, 'You shall not come in!' and I can't brace up enough to turn him out until I get a bite to remember him by. I wouldn't have believed that wolves were so plenty as I have found them to-day. It must have been an extra good day for them!"

"Perhaps you noticed them more. One sees what one looks for," Louis suggested.

"Well, this one seems to have eaten up our concert, anyway," Burton said. "What a good time the fellows must be having!"

"But I would rather be here," Louis said.

They had gone another mile, when they heard bells approaching rapidly.

"Perhaps we can get a lift," Burton said; and

turning to look, they saw the very barge they had deserted.

"Is it you?" Louis asked, in surprise. "What's the matter? Concert didn't come off?"

"Oh, yes," Brewer answered. "It came off, fast enough, — and so did we! As for being us, it's all that is left of us. I feel small enough to creep into a mouse-hole, or rattle in a chestnut-shell. Tumble in! We happen to be going your way, and I'll explain."

They sprang in, and he proceeded.

"The coast was clear when we went into the hall; but just as the singing began, in came the Prof. I would give all my old shoes to have seen his face when he discovered us! But I didn't see him till he had recovered from the shock. He nodded to us, as if it was all right. He's a brick, — I'll say that for him, — not to make a row there. All the same, his mouth had that set look that it takes sometimes, and I knew there was thunder in the air. He began writing on the back of his programme, and pretty soon it was handed to me. Want to hear his message? I can say it.

"'I forbade you to come here, and you came. Now, I order you all to return home at once, and remain in your rooms until further notice; and I *advise* you to obey.'

"Wasn't that sweet? We thought we would take his advice. We didn't put on any airs

coming out of that hall, I can tell you. We filed out, heads down, as meek as so many sheep. I never felt so cheap in my life. Anybody might have had me for five cents, with a chromo thrown in! And here we are, minus the concert, and plus a pleasant prospect for to-morrow! I can't say that I'm anxious to see the Prof. again!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"Walking his round of duty
Serenely, day by day,
With the strong man's hand of labor,
And childhood's heart of play;

"True as the knights of story,
Sir Lancelot and his peers;
Brave in his calm endurance,
As they in tilt of spears."

—J. G. WHITTIER.

AS the days passed on, there came a change in Louis. A cloud seemed to settle over his bright face. His ready smile was gone. He spoke only when it was necessary, and often appeared to be lost in unpleasant thought. He attended faithfully to every duty still; but he did it as if they were duties merely, and not pleasures, as they had always seemed to be.

The change was so complete that every one noticed it. Chester knew the very day when it began, though its cause was as much a mystery to him as to any one. He ventured on a question or two, but Louis kept his own counsel.

One day, with some embarrassment, he asked Mrs. Marten if he might spend his evenings and nights at home, promising to return as early as she

chose in the morning. His mother wanted him, he said. Mrs. Marten consented; but she thought the request was singular, and his manner still more so.

"You had better draw the curb a little on that young Thorne of yours," a neighbor said to her soon after. "You are letting him have his head too much. I hear of him in bad company; and last night I saw him myself, going into Winter's, when he ought to have been in bed. You know the character that place has, and deserves to have."

"Our Louis? That's impossible! You must have mistaken some one else for him," Mrs. Marten said confidently. "Louis isn't that kind of a boy. He's as steady as old Time in the Primer!"

"I advise you to look after him," her friend repeated. "I've heard of boys who looked as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouths, and were as mild as new milk at home, who would foam up like soda-water as soon as they got away where they could have a chance. Anyway, I guess I know Louis Thorne by sight; and if it wasn't him that I saw last night, I'll eat him without salt! He knows best what he was doing there. The thorn will prick you, if you don't take care."

Still she looked unconvinced.

"I should much sooner believe that you were mistaken than that Louis was in such a place," she said. "You mean it kindly; but I'm sure there is a mistake."

He muttered something about being "wiser than ten men who could render a reason"; and she turned away, but looked back to say, "All boys look alike in the night," taking the proverbial woman's last word.

She would not ask Louis for an explanation. Why should she, when she did not, or would not, believe there was anything to explain?

But constant dropping wears away the stone. From one person after another she heard of Louis' repeated visits to Winter's, which was a liquor saloon of unsavory reputation. She began to grow uneasy. Perhaps for that very reason she answered Burton sharply, when he ventured to allude to the rumors.

"'The dream of the cat is about mice,'" she said; "but that's no proof that there's one in the barn."

"It's no dream of mine. The stories seem to be true," he urged.

"That's no reason why you should lend them wings," she returned. "'The sun will go down, all by himself, without your help.' And even if they were true, you are the last person to blame him. 'The friar preached against stealing, when he had a pudding in his sleeve!' Do you think I don't know that you are always ready for any sort of mischief? 'Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.'"

Burton shrugged his shoulders.

"Mischief? yes," he said; "but one must draw

the line somewhere, and I draw it at Winter's. That wolf is too big for me. And to think of Lady Louisa going there! I did believe he was a Christian, if there ever was one, and I wished I was like him; but to think of him there! 'What a fall was there, my countrymen!'"

"The pan says to the pot, 'keep off, or you'll smutch me.' I only wish you were half as good as Louis. 'When the fox preaches, look after the geese!'" she retorted, silencing Burton completely.

"I promised to trust him, and I mean to keep my word," she said to herself, "but I didn't promise to shut my eyes. He certainly does not seem like himself of late. Something is wrong. If I ask him point blank, he will think I doubt him. But suppose he should be trying to hoodwink me? 'All are not saints who go to church.' I should like to find out the truth. 'Seeing is believing.' I've got two eyes of my own, and a pair of spectacles besides, and I mean to use them!"

She waited until the evening was well advanced; then put on her bonnet and went out.

It was a dark and rainy night. The streets were almost deserted. The wind blew in fitful gusts, driving the rain before it, and was so strong that she did not find it easy to hold her umbrella.

She turned her steps first to Mrs. Thorne's cottage. It was a long walk in the rain; but when she reached it, she did not enter. The shades

were not dropped, and she could see plainly into the room. Louis was not there. Mrs. Thorne sat by Freda's bed, sewing busily. At the sound of steps, she lifted her head, and listened as if expecting some one, but all was still again.

"'Second thoughts are best,'" Mrs. Marten reflected. "If I find him in that den, it will be time enough to distress them!"

She made her way down River Street, and stopped opposite Winter's saloon, listening to the "sound of revelry by night," which could be heard for some distance. She drew nearer, and looked into the brightly lighted room.

Yes, Louis was there! His face was turned away from her, but there was no mistaking him. He seemed to be talking earnestly to one of the men; but the others were listening, and when he ended, a shout of laughter followed. She could easily imagine how popular his ready wit and merry laugh would make him among those men.

While she looked, there was a movement in the saloon. She hastily crossed the street again, and took refuge in a doorway opposite, just as Louis himself came out.

Some one was with him, holding his arm, and he seemed to put up his umbrella with some difficulty. She heard the silly laugh of the half-drunken man, and Louis answered him, though she could not distinguish the words. By the light which streamed from the saloon windows,

she watched them stagger down the street, and then she turned towards home.

She felt both angry and hurt, and her cheeks were wet with something besides the raindrops. She had been so fond of Louis, so proud of his energy and independence, so interested in his success, had tried in so many ways to help him, and thought he was doing so well, that this discovery was a great disappointment to her. She prided herself upon her penetration, too, and the thought that she had been so easily deceived was not pleasant.

"Well, it might be worse," she reflected. "'If I have lost my rings, I have my fingers still.' I did my best, and I won't regret it, even though it has turned out so ill. 'Do good, and throw it into the sea; if the fishes don't know it, God will.'"

She dismissed Louis the next morning. She intended only to tell him that she needed him no longer; but one thing led to another, until she found herself taxing him with his misdeeds.

"I did trust you, Louis," she said, almost crying, "and I tried to help you, but 'eaten bread is soon forgotten.' I put more confidence in you than I ever did, or ever shall, put in another boy, and I never suspected you of 'carrying two faces under one hood.' I wouldn't believe anything short of the report of my own eyes, though I heard stories enough about you; but I saw this myself. I held

you up as an example to Burton, but it seems that I 'fled from the rain, and sat down under the water-spout'; for though he is always in mischief, he would scorn such downright wickedness. And you, a professing Christian, too! How can you do it? It just proves the old saying true, 'Nothing is more like an honest man than a rogue.'"

Louis listened, with flushing cheeks, but he let her finish without interruption. He looked troubled, but he showed no consciousness of guilt, and his clear eyes met hers as frankly as ever.

"You promised once that you would listen to me, if such a thing as this ever happened," he said, when she gave him a chance to speak. "I pledge you my word that not a drop of anything intoxicating has ever passed my lips, and it never shall. I despise the stuff!" he finished, with a sudden flash of energy.

Mrs. Marten wavered a little.

"Can there be a mistake," she said doubtfully. "I see you are not afraid to look at me, and 'when the mouse laughs at the cat, there is a hole.' You have never told me an untruth, and certainly I did not *see* you drink; but still, people don't go to Winter's, night after night, to drink new milk! If I find a boy in my cherry-tree, I don't need to ask whether he is digging potatoes up there. Besides, 'tell me the company you keep, and I'll tell you who you are!' That man with you was certainly drunk; and it seemed to me that your walk was no steadier than his."

"Very likely," Louis said, "for I carried part of his weight. But I can't let you think so ill of me, Mrs. Marten. I see now that it does look suspicious to one who doesn't know about it, though I never thought of it before. I will tell you the whole. I didn't go to that place for my own pleasure. I went to persuade my father to come home, and I was helping him home when you saw me."

"Your father!" Mrs. Marten exclaimed. "I thought he was dead!"

"I knew you did," he answered; "but you only inferred it. Sometimes I wondered whether I ought not to tell you, though you asked no questions, but I could not make up my mind to speak of him. We never spoke of him, even at home. He was really dead to us. He went away two years ago, without giving us the least notice, or even saying good by; and we never saw him again, until he came in one night three weeks ago, in much the same state as when he left us, and asked mother when supper would be ready!"

"But you had heard from him? He had sent you money?" she said.

"Not a word; not a cent," Louis replied. "When he came to himself again, he said he thought we should do better without him; and in some ways he was right. We have supported ourselves, after a fashion. The wolf has scratched at the door sometimes; but we have managed, so

far, to keep him out; and mother is earning good wages, and I am growing older, so that I think we can defy him now, — unless the liquor bills are too heavy."

He was thinking of the little fund laid by for the doctor's bill, which had disappeared since the wanderer's return.

"It is a shame!" Mrs. Marten exclaimed.

Louis nodded.

"Mother will never let me say so," he said, half laughing; "but I can't help thinking it. She says, I must remember, whatever he does, that he is my father; but he doesn't make it easy. I try to honor him, according to the commandment; but how can I? If you could see him when he is himself, you would say he was just splendid, and he is; but when he has been drinking, he doesn't know what he says or does."

"Then that is the reason why your mother wanted you at home at night?" she said.

"Yes," he answered. "It is very odd; but he will listen to me, when he won't to mother or Freda. And sometimes, though not always, I can coax him away from the saloon. That's what I did last night. But I never thought of any one's dreaming that I went there for my own pleasure! I despise the place, and the people in it! Such a set! I wish it wasn't against the law to drop a lighted match into it, some night. The world would be better without it."

"May be; but I guess I wouldn't do that!" she said.

"There's one comfort," he went on. "He only goes out at night. If anybody had told us, years ago, that he would ever sink to this, that we should be glad to hide him, how we should have scouted it! I can't understand how a man can give up everything, and make himself worse than a brute, just for something to drink!" he said, with boyish scorn. "It is worse than Esau and his pottage! But mother is certain that some day he will reform, and our good times will come back again. I am glad she can believe it; I wish I could."

"'When things come to the worst, they will mend,'" Mrs. Marten rejoined. "If your mother doesn't give up, why should you? Your good times may be just at the door. Perhaps it is your hand that is to turn the key and let them in. 'It is darkest just before dawn.'"

Louis shook his head doubtfully.

"It's been 'darkest' a good while," he said.

"Then it's getting time for the sun to rise," Mrs. Marten returned. "Why, Louis, what ails you? Don't you believe that God can save your father?"

"Why, of course He can," Louis said.

"Then why don't you ask Him to do it?" she rejoined.

"I have," he said.

"May be," she said; "but you don't speak as if you expected Him to do it. Where's your faith?"

Louis was silent.

"I see," he said presently, "I haven't had any faith. But I know God can do it, and I will ask again and expect an answer. Will you pray for both of us?"

"Of course I will," the good woman said. "But you must both pray and work. If you have influence enough to get him away from Winter's, I think a little more might prevent his going there."

"I have done my best, and failed," said Louis.

"Very likely," she replied; "but your best of yesterday isn't your best of to-day. Try again. Persuade him to sign the pledge, if you can. That's something to hold on by. Then there's a Reform Club in town, and I'm sure they would help you."

But Louis shrank from this.

"I can't bear to have people know of it," he said. "Remember, he's my father; and though I do get out of patience with him, I can't stand having people despise him."

"They won't, when you have helped him to make himself worthy of respect again," she said. "But you must see that it won't do to hide him. People must know about him; for your own reputation is suffering; and, even if you were willing to bear that, you have no right to bring such a reproach upon the church. Others believe what I believed. Secrecy will harm you, and do him no

good. But don't give him up. 'While there's life, there's hope.' And now go about your work. I seem to be always dismissing you and having to take it back!"

Louis went, with a brighter face than he had lately worn. Sympathy makes a burden seem lighter, and the reminder of God's power had given him hope. He resolved to begin afresh, and use every means that he could think of, with his utmost energy and perseverance, to bring his father back.

Mrs. Marten introduced him to several members of the Reform Club, and he asked their advice and help. They gave it willingly; and having been in the depths themselves, seemed to know how to help another out.

Before Mr. Thorne knew how it happened, he found himself surrounded by a little circle of friends, who knew exactly what his temptations were, and what help he needed. They procured work for him, which kept him busy through the day; and one who lived near him made a point of walking home with him every night, convoying him safely past the man-traps in the way. When evening came, others were sure to drop in, on one pretext or another, and his instinct of courtesy had force enough to prevent his leaving them, to go to the saloon.

Additional comforts appeared in the little home, and Mrs. Thorne's face began to brighten. Yet

he steadily refused to sign the pledge; and in spite of all their care, and of his own resolutions, he would find his way to the saloons now and then, though his indulgence was less frequent.

But when one thing failed, Louis tried another. He prayed as he had never prayed before, and he felt the answer of peace in his heart. No failure seemed to discourage him, and his very confidence of success began to influence his father.

The poor slave wanted to be free from his chains, but he had not will-power enough to throw them off. Louis' firmness of purpose and steady assurance of victory seemed to be a stay and a support to his wavering will. He talked freely with him about it, mourned over his lapses, of which he seemed thoroughly ashamed, but declared that a little stimulant from time to time was an absolute necessity to him.

"There is such a craving, gnawing feeling," he said. "I can't describe it to you; but when it gets unendurable, I *must* drink."

"But that only stops it for the time," Louis said.

"That's all, and it gets worse every time," Mr. Thorne said. "I suppose I know what it must come to, but I can't help it."

"You say that, and yet you won't sign a pledge to give it up!" Louis exclaimed.

"You all seem to think there's some magic in that pledge," Mr. Thorne returned. "I know bet-

ter. I won't give my word only to break it; and when that feeling comes, you might as well tell a starving man not to eat. I couldn't live without it."

Louis glanced at the tall, strong figure, with distinct unbelief.

"But I'll brew you gallons of coffee to tide you over the crisis," he said. "I can make delicious coffee."

But his father shook his head.

"You would do anything you could, I know," he said; "and I think I would; but if I ever get out, it will be because you pray me out. A man is mad who forms the habit of drinking; but once formed, it holds him fast."

"Unless he has resolution enough to break away! You know I don't mean to be disrespectful, father," Louis said earnestly; "but only think how much sorrow your drinking brings both upon yourself and us. It is the one trouble of our lives. It seems to me that we could bear anything else better. Won't you make this effort for our sakes? With God's help I know you could do it. I am proud of my father when he is himself, but I am ashamed to be called a drunkard's son. It throws a shadow over all my prospects. I know you always keep your word. If you care for our happiness, or for my success in life, or for your own soul, do promise me not to touch that stuff again!"

"I promise that I'll do my very best, Louis," he said, impressed by the boy's earnest appeal.

He was very proud of his son, and it hurt him to hear that he was ashamed of him; though he knew that he had reason to be. He did try, with better success than ever before, and Louis' hopes ran high; but then there came another fall. When Mr. Thorne came to himself again, he was in despair.

"You see!" he said; "and yet I did do my best, as I promised you. You will have to give me up."

"Not a bit of it," said Louis. "I see that you can't do it in your own strength; but you can with God's help. I ask Him every day to give it to you; dear father, won't you ask for yourself?"

"I really thought we had succeeded at last," Louis said to Mrs. Marten. "If he once took the pledge, he would keep it, whatever it cost him; and he almost promised before this last time."

"Almost!" she returned. "'I almost killed the bird, but no one can eat "almost" in a stew.' Get him to go just a step further, Louis. That one step means just the difference between safety and ruin."

"We'll fetch it yet," Louis said hopefully. "He is trying again; and I think he begins to see that he must have God's help. I wish I could lock him up till he could get over that horrible craving. People in jail have to do without it!"

But help was coming. The weak will was to be guarded by something stronger than bolts or bars. Louis' prayers were answered, though not in the way he expected. Our blessings often come in the disguise of trials, and our Father takes His own way and time to send them.

That night there was an alarm of fire. The hotel was burning. When Louis and his father reached it, the flames were streaming through the roof. It was past saving, and the firemen turned the water on the next house, which was in imminent danger.

Suddenly there was a cry of horror. A child was seen at a window of the doomed building, reaching out imploring hands for help. A thrill ran through the crowd, but even the brave firemen hesitated.

"There's no chance!" "It's certain death!" "Get a ladder!" a multitude of voices shouted together.

Louis could not stop to count chances with that child before his eyes. A thought of the "knight evening" with Miss Cecil flashed across his mind, in the midst of the tumult. He sprang forward, but his father held him back.

"*Your* life is worth something!" he said hurriedly. "I'll go!"

He wrung Louis' hand. By the ruddy light of the flames, his face was seen, full of resolute purpose. Before any one could stop him, he caught

a rope from a fireman and disappeared in the black, rolling clouds of smoke.

The crowd waited breathlessly.

The stairs were burning. He dipped his handkerchief in the water which flooded the floor, held it over his mouth and nostrils, and rushed up through the flames. Scorched and blinded, and gasping for breath, he groped his way to the terrified child, guided by her screams. The rope was short, but it sufficed to lower her until he could drop her safely on the mattress which eager hands held up.

Only then he thought of himself. He turned; but his retreat was cut off. The red flames rolled up fierce and fast behind him. The heat was insufferable. The roar of the fire was in his ears. The thick smoke suffocated him. There seemed no way of escape.

As Death drew near, his wasted life, and the judgment to come, rose up before him, more terrible than the flames behind him. In the midst of that blazing furnace, he threw up his hands, as if he would lay hold on the horns of the altar, and uttered the first real prayer that ever passed his lips.

"O God, forgive me for Jesus' sake! Have mercy on me!" he cried out.

And the Lord, merciful and gracious, hearkened and heard. Through smoke and flame came the message of pardon, and the angels in heaven rejoiced.

A tongue of fire touched his cheek. He felt the scorching floor tremble under his feet. The wall to which he was clinging, bent.

"Jump! Jump! For your life!" a clear voice rang out over the tumult.

He saw Louis' agonized face, his beckoning gesture, and he leaped, just as the wall fell with a crash.

Two days after, as he lay in his own bed, bruised and burned, and with a broken leg, but still with a new look of peace upon his face, Louis guided his bandaged hand to write his name under the pledge.

"'Saved, as by fire,'" Mr. Thorne said, looking at the wavering lines. "I know what that means. I have faced death now, and I know how it looks. When it comes to me again, it will be my Father's messenger, and with His help, it shall not find a drunkard! I don't believe that I shall ask for liquor; but if I should be mad enough to do it, don't give me one drop, even if I die for lack of it! I will die sober!"

"Why, man, you're not going to die!" Mrs. Marten said, wiping her eyes. "You are going to live, to see Louis make as noble a man as his father."

"Poor Louis!" he said.

"Rich Louis!" the boy said quickly. "For he has a father to be proud of."

"Proud!" he echoed sadly.

"Don't look back," Mrs. Marten said, in her most cheery tone. "'If the best man's faults were written on his forehead, it would make him pull his hat over his eyes.' The fire has burned up the record of your past, among the Westerham people, and you shall start afresh with bright prospects."

"As for the rest," Louis said, interpreting the anxious look at his mother and Freda, "I'm the man of the house, you know, until you get about again. Then I'll resign in your favor. That was Mr. Howarth's little girl that you saved, and he says I shall have all the help I need to get my education. But I've left school for the present, and I'm to work for him, and take care of you, until you get well."

"You are used to that," his father said. "It is very kind of Mr. Howarth; but I shall be able to take care of my boy, I hope, and let him study as much as he likes, when I am well once more. I can't make up for the past, and I am helpless in the present, but the future looks bright."

"I don't see why you need be anxious about the present," Mrs. Marten said. "Live one day at a time. I'm sure you have all you need for to-day, and what more do you want? 'A bird can roost on but one branch; a mouse can drink no more than its fill from a river.' 'Enough is as good as a feast.' Besides, you are the hero of the place, and everything in it is at your service."

"Louis is the true hero," Mr. Thorne said. "It takes more heroism for such months of work and patience, than for the bold deed of a moment."

It was the turning-point in Louis' career. Life lay smooth before him afterwards, and his way was easy; but the discipline he had endured did for him what their chivalric training did for the knights of old. Through college, and law-school, and the battle of political life, he kept his armor braced, and his weapons keen and bright; and no one who came in contact with him could doubt under what flag he fought.

Years had passed, when, after a visit to Dr. Henry Lawrence, he came again to Mrs. Marten's door.

She had grown old and feeble, and did not recognize him.

"I came to thank you for the help you once gave me," he said.

"Well," she answered, "'soon or late the strong needs the help of the weak'; but it must have been such help as the mouse gave the lion, for I don't remember it, or you, sir."

He had to introduce himself; and after her first exclamations were over, she insisted on hearing all his history.

"I always said you would succeed," she commented. "Don't you remember I did? 'A stone that is fit for the wall isn't left by the way.' And

if you did have a hard time once, you're none the worse for it now. 'Smooth seas never made a skilful mariner.' Oh, here comes Sophy and her husband!"

With great pride she introduced them to "Governor Thorne." The two gentlemen looked at each other, and exclaimed together: —

"It's Jim Burton!"

"It's Lady Louisa!"

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